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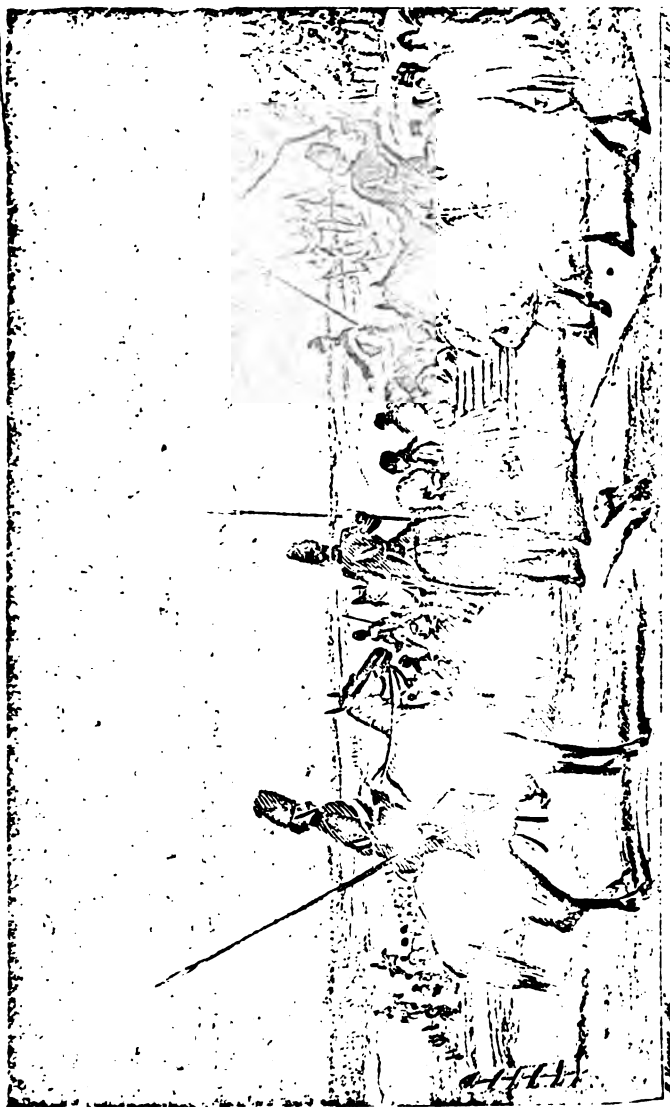


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" REVELATIONS OF RUSSIA //

IN 1846,

BY AN ENGLISH RESIDENT.

Charles Fredericksz Hammingen

THIRD EDITION.

REVISED AND CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR, WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES,
AND BROUGHT DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIME.

"Tôt ou tard, tout se sçait."—MAINTENON.

" 1 "

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER.
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1846.

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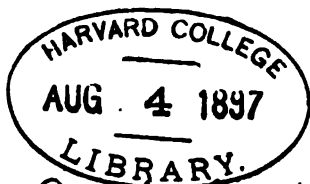
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See pg xxi

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Bright fund.
(2 vols.)



LONDON :

G. J. PALMER, PRINTER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

SINCE the first edition of *Revelations of Russia* appeared, much light has been thrown upon a subject then obscure—the condition of the Russian Empire.

The works of Theiner and of d'Horer (*d'un conseiller d'Etat Russe*), the letters of Marmier, the *Mystères de la Russie*, *La Russie par un homme d'état Russe*, and lastly, *Russia under the Autocrat Nicholas I.*, by Ivan Golovine, have added to the scanty mass of information then possessed, and have confirmed, one by one, all the most startling statements put forth in "the Revelations."

The author himself has endeavoured further to add to the common stock of knowledge, by the publication of the "White Slave," a fiction intended to complete the picture of slavery and of manners in the Russian Empire; and more recently of a work entitled "Eastern Europe and the Emperor Nicholas," chiefly devoted to the exposition of the state of Poland, and to

the relations of the Russian cabinet with neighbouring governments and races.

But these works cannot be properly appreciated or understood by a reader unacquainted with the elementary features of the Russian despotism, set forth in these volumes, to which the author is thus obliged to refer him, and hence, the previous editions having been exhausted, it has been deemed expedient to offer to the public this edition, brought down to the present year, by annotations on such changes as have taken place since its first publication.

In so doing, he feels called upon by the very popularity which these works have enjoyed, to notice two erroneous impressions which have gone abroad respecting them.

The first relates to the work entitled "*Mystères de Russie*," which has been remarked to embody a great number of anecdotes contained in the "*Revelations*." As the author has given none but facts, or at least reports, which from their currency and the credit they enjoy in Russia, are equally significant, he cannot venture to say that these may not equally have been collected by the author of the "*Mystères de Russie*." Without, therefore, charging him with having copied them from "*the Revelations*," which he was quite at liberty to have done, even unacknowledged, as the object of their author was to popularize the matter they contained, he still, on account of an insinuation which has reached his ears, begs to call the attention of the

reader to the fact that the first numbers of the "Mystères" appeared subsequently to the publication of the whole of the Revelations of Russia, and many months after portions of them had been printed in the New Monthly and United Service Magazines.

The second refers to the very flattering attribution of the Revelations of Russia, and of the White Slave, to several distinguished individuals.

The public press, in its criticisms, has even by name, given them out as the productions of the pen of the talented author of "Historic Fancies."

Whilst retaining his anonymity, the real author of these works would hardly have felt called upon to notice an implied eulogium so conducive to their popularity, had it not been that it is more than probable that neither the author of "Historic Fancies," nor the other individuals above alluded to, have any of that personal acquaintance with the Russian Empire, on which the author of the Revelations of Russia grounds his claim to the attention of the reader, whom he begs again to assure that the contents of the following pages are, without exception, the result of observations made upon the spot, or of information there collected.

THE AUTHOR.

London, January, 1846.

In the Press,

THE MYSTERIES OF RUSSIA.

In 2 vols., small octavo.

P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THESE volumes relate to a subject which is, or ought to be, fraught with interest to every friend of humanity, and to every English reader.

To every friend of humanity—because involving the present condition of one-twelfth of the whole human race, together with the prospect of a much larger portion of it, should the government of Russia, and the state to which it has reduced its empire, continue to be, through the future, as incompletely known to free countries as it has been to the past, and still remains to the contemporary public.

To every Englishman it offers the additional attraction of treating of the empire next in power and magnitude to his own; an empire antagonistic to the feelings, institutions, and material interests of the people to which he belongs; one against which this nation must some day inevitably find itself arrayed—even if neglectful of more noble impulses, by the mere

force of these material interests—as the champion of the freedom, enlightenment, and civilization of a large portion of mankind, against the adverse principle which Russia not only represents, but seeks to propagate with the extension of its rule.

The general dislike entertained towards Russia in England, if applied to its cabinet, would be instinctively true to the national interests, feelings, and position. The Russian cabinet is not only the implacable, if insidious, enemy of British commerce, enterprise, and prosperity,—not only a power repressive of all that excites its sympathies, invasive of all human liberties, civil, political, and religious—but so powerful and so situated as to be only accessible, though perfectly accessible, to the anger and hostility of Great Britain.

We have, indeed, examples that the strong antipathies of nations are often as groundless as violent; to go no further than the extinguished hatred of the Scotch and English; the family feud of Denmark and Sweden, only now subsiding; or the mutual animosities of France and England, which France is so slowly relinquishing. But these are antipathies which fade away surely, if slowly, before increased inter-knowledge, rendering a quarrel between these nations year by year more difficult. With Russia, on the contrary, the chances of a rupture will become ever more imminent, as she becomes better known to the people of Great Britain.

Perhaps this is the true distinction betwixt a national and a factitious hatred—that the light of knowledge thrown upon their objects increases the one and destroys the other.

The instinctive dislike of the people of England to Russia and its institutions is only tempered by the interested views, firstly, of those whose selfish policy takes no concern, except in the material advantages which it imagines to be secured by continued amity with its government; secondly, by men who, when they contemplate the imaginary difficulties of interfering effectively with Russia, judge it most expedient to discourage the popular antipathy against her, and deaden the national sympathy for her victims; and lastly, by those whose home experience of imaginary or exaggerated grievances has blunted their perceptions or their feelings, even to those most really affecting their own countrymen, and consequently leaves them callous or incredulous to the sufferings of any distant portion of the human family.

But increased knowledge of the subject will teach the most selfish utilitarian, that even the material advantages to which he would sacrifice all other considerations, are likely to be more injured by forbearance than by interference. It will shew practical men, even those not titularly so, who are only unwilling to "bark where they cannot bite," both the weakness of Russia, if assailed by Great Britain, and her consciousness of this weakness, which she hopes to outgrow. It will shew her Polish, Finnish, Baltic, and Caucasian provinces, her very capital, and her two great outlets to the seas, all jeopardized in any serious collision with Great Britain.

Those who are anxious to believe the miserable condition of Russian subjects to be as much exaggerated as some of the grievances of their own compatriots, or at least not exceeding those which are most

real, will find, with increased knowledge of the subject, no similitude between the partial sufferings of classes in England, the inevitable result of circumstances, which their fellow-men, be it even through mistaken means, are striving to alleviate—no similitude between sufferings which have a voice, and force themselves upon the ear of a nation, that dares not avow itself unwilling to listen or unsolicitous to relieve, and between those of sixty millions of Russian subjects, voiceless and hopeless in their misery, without the power of appeal to any human protective sympathy, or, as they are taught, even to any in Heaven, which, in their eyes, is the accomplice of the power for whose sole advantage they are born, and toil through life, and die. Not the victims of a cruel chance or stern necessity, the unhappy losers in a great social movement, which has added to the aggregate wealth and prosperity of a nation—not the redundant population of an old country, too numerous for its resources,—but the inhabitants of a vast and fertile territory, offering precisely the same elements of prosperity as the United States of North America, with a similar world of advantages open to their industry, but sunk by a demoralizing system into a condition it will be the endeavour of the following pages to describe;—a whole people, suffering and debased, without any aim or end in its sufferings and debasement, beyond ministering to the morbid appetite for power, of one single family, or any prospect beyond that of extending the same enthrallment to races still unsubdued, and generations yet unborn.

Hitherto Russia has not only remained unknown beyond its superficies, but, what is worse, has been

misrepresented, wherever an attempt has been made to penetrate it.

The reader's experience, if he have sought for information on this subject, must bear out the assertion, that nothing whatever affording it has yet been published. The Marquis de Custine has indeed, with piercing eye, detected much of the stage scenery of the Russian empire, as he hurried through it—suspected more—and spoken out his truthful impressions with a bold, unfaltering, if loquacious tongue. writing!

But if the author had not been acquainted with all the facts which justify so many of that writer's opinions, and verify so many of his suspicions, he would hardly have ventured to acquiesce in the severity of his judgments.

From the perusal of these volumes, the reader will not be tempted, perhaps, to draw more favourable conclusions; but he will at least form his opinions from the evidence and facts before him.

The author feels convinced that when the reader has followed him through some of the earlier chapters, *the internal evidence of truth which they exhibit will render needless the assurance that their contents are the result of an extent of personal observation on his part, or of information collected by him on the spot, beyond the opportunities afforded to the mere traveller.* He is also satisfied, that if the reader have ever read through any of the hitherto published works on Russia, he cannot fail to accompany him through all these pages. He has neglected for them all the adornment of art, being fully sensible that the importance of the matter he had to impart was sufficiently great to absorb all consideration of the manner in which it

was conveyed, and he was therefore rather solicitous to omit no material facts, than to give others a more effective and graceful classification, or to dress them in a garb more attractive.

In the present volumes he has endeavoured to throw these "revelations" into somewhat of an elementary form. But this is indispensable with the great majority of readers, who, without some knowledge of the nature of so many Russian institutions, similar in name, but only in name, to those of other civilized countries, must otherwise fall into that most fruitful source of all human error—the misapplication of words to things.

Thus, a freeman, a legislative assembly, a church regulation, a police, a court of justice, or a grade in society, are synonymes of what are so utterly dissimilar in the rest of Europe, that neither in nature nor in purpose do they bear more resemblance to them than the old Roman Pantheon to the Pantheon Bazaar, in Oxford-street.

As, at the present day, it is the object rather to write books that shall be much read than much admired, so, in this instance, the author may use to the critic the words of the Athenian, "Strike, but hear me!" because indifferent whether these volumes be considered well or ill written, so that he be heard, and have neglected nothing which may instruct. He will thus ensure to himself the satisfaction of having carried a torch into some of the dark recesses of a system which inspires such a vague, instinctive terror to all free people, and of helping to define the hideous features of an oriental despotism, served by the energetic centralization of the French revolutionary epoch,

and inspired by the propagandist spirit of the Koran's early disciples—a despotism striving to wear withal the mask of a reforming absolutism, adopting strong measures to bring a barbarous people within the pale of civilization, and thus, whilst civilization's arch-enemy, travestied as its apostle.

Since a more accurate knowledge of the Russian system of government, and of the condition to which it reduces its victims, must have the effect of exciting the indignation of those hitherto least unfavourably disposed towards Russia, and of increasing all existing antipathy,—since these volumes can hardly fail to throw some light on the subject,—they must necessarily contribute to the growing unpopularity which increased knowledge must occasion. But, notwithstanding these inevitable results of the truthful portraiture of so dark a subject, the author disclaims all intention of pampering the public appetite for scandal respecting objects which it instinctively dislikes. He must also distinctly state, that he is animated by no prejudice against the Russian nation; he thinks he has discerned in it—and has pointed out where he has so discerned—many traits in its character, which render it amiable in the midst of its degradation. He has endeavoured to paint its condition as worthy of our interest, our pity, and our sympathy, and to point out how little active share it has in the oppression of which it is the victim as well as the instrument. Neither has he any personal antipathy to the Emperor Nicholas, because a long study of his character and acts have taught him, that if he be a more complete tyrant, he is not a worse individual, than the average of his predecessors: he is a more complete tyrant,

because he has the power of being so. Many successive reigns, like the growth of succeeding years which bring a tree to maturity, have improved and completed the mechanism of a vast engine of levelling oriental despotism, and enabled him to use it with the full light of European science; whilst all his passions and propensities, tending towards the acquisition of absolute power, have never diverted him, like his predecessors, from that object.

The Emperor Nicholas has not the brutal instincts of the Tsar Peter the First, any more than his talents; he has not the disordered passions of the lustful Catherine, his grandmother, any more than her brilliant intellect and her innate liberality; he has not the fitful ferocity of Paul, his murdered sire, any more than his enthusiastic generosity; neither has he the irresolute, impressionable nature of Alexander, his brother and predecessor, nor Alexander's benevolence of intention.

If the Emperor Nicholas had been born in the place of Peter, he is the man to have shut himself up with his slaves, in the isolation of a Chinese despot, although he might never have cut off heads with his own hand, or presided at the impalement of his enemies.

Incapable of the vices of his grandmother, he would never, like her, have turned his imperial palaces into temples of the Venus Meretrix; but he is equally incapable, either of allowing his subjects, like his bold progenitrix, the liberty which did not immediately impede the march of her government, or of conceiving the idea of giving them liberal institutions—a project which the intoxication of her pleasures and

successes caused her to postpone until too late, but not to abandon. He is not the man to shoot for a wager a female slave working in his garden, like his brother Constantine, any more than to have given up, like Constantine, an empire to dry the tears of a woman. He would not, like Alexander, for the sake of seeing his favourites smile, have allowed them to tyrannize over his subjects *on their own account*, any more than he would, like Alexander, have wept to see it—any more than he would, like Alexander, have advocated a charter for the French people, although to be given without prejudice to his own autocratic rights, but in sacrilegious precedent against the right divine of princes.

On the whole, therefore, Nicholas is neither better nor worse than the average of his predecessors, inclusive of the great Tsar who first made Russia European; but he has done, and he bids fair to do, more injury to mankind than all of them put together. Without, perhaps, the genius or the boldness to have ever played more than a very subaltern part in many situations of life, he was peculiarly calculated, when placed by the chances of birth in possession of such power, and at the head of such a system, to push it to its extremest limits. He possesses, besides his singleness of purpose, precisely the quantum of moral courage, of obstinacy, and of intellect, to allow him to use the means in his power, in the most effective manner, to attain this end, and withal the exaggerated self-veneration to induce him to do so.

During the nineteen years of his reign, only seven men have been condemned to death, but probably more than in all the united reigns alluded to have in

reality perished by the hands of the executioner. Men, indeed, are not decapitated, impaled, or hanged up by the ribs with hooks, as formerly ; but whole companies of Polish prisoners are flogged to death ; the knout and plitt, which tear away in strips the muscles from the bone, have been inflicted upon thousands and thousands for political offences, who die within a day or two, or perish on the Siberian journey which inevitably follows. So those have been treated who only refused to change the faith of their fathers on an imperial order.

We read with horror, that under the long regency of Biren, twenty thousand individuals were banished to Siberia for political crimes. The Emperor Nicholas, on the lowest computation, has sent on the same weary journey two hundred and fifty thousand—a quarter of a million of individuals ! Of these, three-fifths had offended politically, in some direct or indirect manner.

The Emperor Nicholas—who since the Turkish campaign avoids so carefully the perils of the game of war he is so fond of playing—who nervously shudders at the physical danger in which he sees a private soldier placed, is probably not innately cruel ; but absolute and irresponsible power,—the self-deification to which his auto-veneration has led,—acting on a limited intellect and selfish heart, have made him think himself the irate Jupiter Tonans, whose wrath should be as terrible as his interests and glory should be sacred from competition with those of humanity. When they are so, he passes over them ruthlessly and remorselessly, without even apparently the consciousness of evil doing.

Other tyrants, even the most sanguinary, whatever their intentions, had no power of inflicting so much misery; they had not at their command the means of doing so, afforded to Nicholas by the centralized authority transmitted into his hand, with the successive improvements of more than one hundred and thirty years, which, when he ascended the throne, had elapsed since Peter began to reduce oppression to a science, and which his one-minded attention, during nearly twenty years more, has enabled him to perfect.

Nero could exhaust his animal ferocity only on a few thousand victims, but might wish in vain that all the Romans had but one neck. Modern centralization, and its science of administration, have virtually realized this wish for Nicholas; at least, he can reach the necks of the remotest of his subjects, and tighten the chain that, under his predecessors, all were liable to wear, but of which, under his despotism, none escape the infliction.

The influence of wealth, of family, of customs, and of privileges, affords no longer any shelter. Prudent as he is in disposition, being aware that he possesses a power unparalleled, he uses it in a manner unprecedented. Not only does he hourly trample on both his great vanquished enemies, the nobility of his empire and the Polish nation—not only has he uprooted whole races, and succeeded in extirpating the religious creed of millions—but he seems now bent, both on destroying the nationality and religious faith of the whole of Poland, even, if required, by transplanting its population into Asia. Political violence and cruelties, the mere extirpation of races or of creeds, would be

nothing, however, to the condition to which his own subjects are reduced — comparatively nothing — because races are doomed, according to the law of nature, to perish, and creeds flourish and wither, and being immaterial, spring again from their ashes. But the dull, monotonous, hopeless, all-pervading oppression to which his subjects are reduced, producing the same moral effect on the human mind as the slough of his northern bogs on the human frame sinking into it, blinding the eyes, silencing the tongue, and paralyzing the agglutinated limbs, is infinitely more terrible—doubly terrible, because it is a destiny the sufferers must not only endure, but propagate, by foreign conquest, and by the natural re-production and increase of population.

In the same manner as the author disclaims all prejudice against the Russian people, and all animosity to its ruler, so, where he may show, in the following pages, any sympathy for the interests of his own country where in collision with those of the Russian government, he is animated by a feeling superior to that arising from the contracted views of mere patriotism. Once overstepping the narrow bounds of nationality, a looker-on can take no interest in the struggle of rival ambitions, excepting in as far as their success or failure may influence the happiness or misery of mankind; and it so happens, that never has history recorded, through the past, prospects so extreme, of good and evil, as are held out in the future, by the extension of the respective rules of England and of Russia.

It is not only that, even at present, there is scarcely

any portion of the human family which would not be benefited by becoming a British dependency, but because, since the last great pacification of Europe, for the first time in the history of nations, England has shewn the birth and steady growth of a NATIONAL MORALITY AND CONSCIENCE.

It is the permanent embodiment in a people of that spirit, of which a transient gleam caused the enthusiastic people of Athens to reject the unknown proposition of Themistocles to destroy the fleet of the assembled allies, when Aristides declared the act to be as unjust as it would be advantageous.

It was this young national conscience which, regardless of the glory, of the prospect of incalculable conquests, and of the Sycee silver ransom which defrayed them, obliged the British government and its supporters to defend their successes in a profitable war against the most populous empire of the earth, with more solicitude than any responsible power had ever shown, to palliate the consequences of the most disastrous quarrel.

It is the growth of this national conscience which, within the last few years, prevents any public man from daring to advocate an aggression, or an acquisition, on the mere plea of its gratifying a national rivalry, or securing a national advantage. No man in a British Parliament would now dare openly to clamour for war, with such an avowed motive. It has now become necessary to persuade the public that a war is just, for mere success will not longer justify it. Even now, if it be unjust, the public must be deceived upon this point; and this is an immense step gained, be-

cause every day it will become more difficult to mislead the public.

This very spirit, which is daily gaining ground, pervading even the national dealings with lawless savages, must not only soon render all injustice impossible, even in the remotest portions of the British empire, but must eventually make the extension of its dominion a mere diffusion over other races, of the rights, privileges, and civilization of its citizens. By turning to the following pages, some idea may be gathered of the fate reserved for that portion of humanity proposed to be Russianized.

There is a class in England, and a very respectable one, who are for leaving to Providence all interference which may lead to violence, even against a system they abhor, and who seek meanwhile, in a quiet humble way, to extract some honey from the bitterness of the hemlock and the nightshade. They indulge unwittingly in a sort of moral Schamaism—a form of worship which is pithily expressed in the vulgar tongue by “holding a candle to the devil.” “Let us,” think they, “repeat no tales and allow no outcry against this terrible Russian government, and by civility we may coax it into an occasional act of humanity;”—and, accordingly, the Emperor Nicholas graciously comes forward, and signs the treaty to make the slave trade piracy; and further, he allows the Bible Societies to circulate their Bibles throughout his empire. These worthy people, who rejoice in the effects of their prudence, will find, on perusing these volumes, that this very Nicholas will not allow, under the severest pains and penalties, of any conversion within his

empire, either of heathen or Christian, except to the Russian church—a church, whose governing synod of bishops all take their orders from the ober-procurator, a layman, lately the Lieutenant-General Count Prastassoff, a military officer, aid-de-camp to the emperor, and representing him as its chief head. These bishops, too, have nominal military rank; thus, first of the clergy of the holy synod, stands the title of “The humble Seraphin, metropolitan of Novgorod and Moscow, full General, and decorated with the order of St. Andrew;” and further, “The Humble Vladimir, Archbishop of Kazan, Lieutenant-general, decorated with the order of St. Vladimir;” “the arch-priest Nicolas Mouzoffsky, Major-general;”—a church proving its enlightenment, not only by retaining the old Julian calendar, which is belied by the annual course of the earth, but whose imperial head has ordered its substitution, in the kingdom of Poland, for the Gregorian—a church which, using, in the spirit of its Byzantine origin, a petty subterfuge, by playing on a letter, gives to the church of Rome, in all its communications, the title of Catholic, or universal. The word Catholic, being derived from the Greek, is in that language spelt with the θ , which the Latins render by the *th*, the Russians by the *f*. Thus, says the synod of the Russian church, we may please the Latins, and all papist princes, by calling their church *Catholic*, but we reserve the epithet *Cafolic* for our own.

Missionaries may indeed introduce Bibles in any given quantity; but let them only venture to attempt to convert, not a member of the Russian church, but a heathen or idolater, to any form of worship but its

own, and Siberia stares them and their proselyte in the face. Parodying the words of the Old Testament, the emperor says, "I am the watchful ruler of the church, and conversions are mine." But although this imperial vicegerent of Heaven will not allow others to labour in the vineyard of souls for any persuasion but his own, it does not thence follow that he will always either do so, or allow it to be done for him.

For instance, he brings up in his cadet schools the children taken as hostages, or kidnapped from Caucasian parents; he wishes to make Russians of them, and then turn them loose amongst their wild relatives, thus hoping to diminish the hatred against which the Russian arms can make no progress. Now if these young mountaineers were converted to Christianity, they would be all the worse received by parents, who, once half Christians, have—thanks to Russian aggression—learned to view that faith with detestation. There is, therefore, an order given that they shall be brought up as Mussulmans. But here and there, with something of the perverseness of a wild race, precisely because it is forbidden, or animated by better aspirations, these Caucasian children are anxious to become Christians; but the emperor, the visible head of a church based upon the Gospel, which says, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven," will not allow it—not even to his own Greek faith—it would defeat the views of his policy. And they will further find, that this very Nicholas is the greatest slave proprietor in the world—upwards of twenty millions belonging to his personal domain; they will find him lending money on the slaves of his nobles,

and every year appropriating them as unredeemed pledges. But these are white slaves, not black, and he therefore signed the Slave Treaty. It was a generosity less costly, but not less insulting to the abolitionists of England, than was to the Polish emigrants, whom he had deprived of wealth, of home, and of country, the sum of money which, during his recent visit to England, he sent to the committee of the Polish ball.

Without sharing the credulity of those who conceive themselves for ever on the threshold of a millennium, the author does believe in a national re-action of opinion in the people of England.

It has been justly observed, that until the cessation of the great political and social tempest, which arose with the French revolution and succeeded it, the public mind, scared and agitated, sought for refuge under the banners of time-honoured parties; that these parties, whose names remained, but whose spirit degenerated into a mere avidity to acquire office when without it—a solicitude to retain when holding it—ceased, when the storm had cleared away, to satisfy the shrewd reflectiveness of the nation. Its practical sense felt, without defining, the hollowness of these aimless parties, and the want of some principle to substitute for their barren expediency of office.

The first theory which presented itself, having a principle—a tendency to something—was the cold, selfish, material doctrine of the Utilitarian school, viewing mankind with the eye of a manufacturer, life as a commercial speculation, and taking no account of human hopes, passions, or happiness.

At this theory, the public mind, in its thirst for

some definite policy, caught eagerly. It was a bad principle, one which, like the concentrically curving rings of a spiral, must continue contracting its sphere to the narrowest measure of human selfishness; but it was still a principle opposed to empty sounds. Some of its first fruits have been to make those possessed of property, and through it of the power of withholding the rights of others, forgetful of all rights but their own.

Whilst the collective population of Great Britain had attained an aggregate of wealth and power never yet equalled, some of its wretched members have died in their rags, of sheer starvation, divided by a few brick walls from the palace-homes of the wealthy, stored with the luxuries which a century ago were beyond the reach of princes.

Setting the rights of property before the precepts of Christianity, before the innate sympathy of man with man, and before the great natural law of self preservation, one portion of this population, holding all this unprecedented wealth, denied to the other the very *right* to live without some portion of that property which it has accumulated from it.

It erected workhouses, indeed, because it is disgusting, inconvenient, and even dangerous, to allow large masses to starve; for starving men will become both ravenous and desperate. But the right to life without property it denied, and its retention it punished by driving it to an oppressive prison, the salutary dread of which kills the pauper slowly, by causing him to abstain too long from its cruel relief.

When Christianity pleaded in his favour, the Utilitarian spirit referred the question to political eco-

nomy, and judged it by the cold precise arithmetic of reason.

But when the poor man, analyzing his position in the same spirit, reflects that all legitimate laws are but means necessary to uphold the social contract—that the social contract was formed for the mutual advantage and benefit of each individual member of civilized society, but that this contract has been warped entirely against him, reducing him to a condition below that of savage life, and sees therefore no reason why he should hesitate to violate those laws which prop up such a system—at least, none beyond the dread of their punishments or his own natural kindness of disposition, both, often vanishing before the real horrors of his situation—then, when he seizes the torch of the incendiary, as there is no reasoning with despair, the Utilitarian has nothing left but to refer him back to Christianity, with its stores of inexhaustible patience and forbearance.

This was the result of a principle, when the old hackneyed parties were without one. All equally adopted, and fitted it to the interests and exigences of the moment. But even though successful, or believed to be successful, in securing a pecuniary advantage to property, the sense and feeling of the nation are not only fast awakening to the conviction, that its poor law is inhuman, unchristian, and unsafe, but to suspicion of the very principle on which it was based, and to contempt of the political sects that truckle to it.

On the contrary, a principle diametrically opposed to it has arisen, and is steadily diffusing itself—a principle, expansive, not contractive, in its nature—

one equally consonant with the dictates of natural and religious feeling and the true interests of all humanity, when these are viewed to consist (as all analytically affect to view them) in the diffusion of the greatest happiness amidst the greatest number. It is still struggling with the interests of classes, still militant with the prejudices and old names of parties—the husks encumbering the chrysalis—but it is daily developing its strong vitality, crushing some, embodying others, and appropriating their better parts. Whether the public press guide or indicate the national mind and feeling, or that they be considered to have a reciprocating action on each other, its talent, wit, and pathos, are hourly enlisting to give a voice to the dictates of the public conscience. Long and valuable columns, formerly filled with party strife, now consecrate their eloquence, to lay incessantly, in all their hideous reality, the sufferings hunted out in ruined cottages, in fetid alleys, and in houses of parochial oppression, before the eyes of those who would willingly avert them, to save the weakness of the heart from acting on the pocket.

However this growing healthful opinion, full of its strong vital energy, may embody itself, whether under old names or new—is nothing to the author's present purpose. The consciousness that it exists and thrives, and under some denomination, and in some form must govern, sufficed to inspire these pages and to cause him to devote them to it.

A few years since, it would have been useless, save to gratify the public curiosity, to have shewn that the extension of a foreign rule was the increase of hopeless and prospectively increasing misery. The

governing, as well as the majority of the governed, would have considered their duty to consist in looking to themselves; if they derived the advantage of a few per cent. on the introduction of manufactures, they would have avowed the principle of upholding a system they abhorred, so long as it did not disadvantageously interfere with them.

When even it could have been shewn, that in addition this foreign power was injuring the interests of the governed, whilst infinitely inferior in strength and resources to those it was injuring, still the governing and the party who supported them would have argued, that though war must prove equally beneficial to humanity and to their country, it might drive them from office.

This foreign power, equally aware of the hopelessness of any struggle with Great Britain, and of the fear that feeble parties at the helm of state within it entertained, not of the results of war to the nation, but to themselves, incessantly held it in terror over them. Thus the Black Sea was allowed to become a Russian lake; thus Poland was allowed to succumb when a feather would have turned the balance; thus the coast of Circassia, with its promised trade, was closed to British commerce, and the resources of the sea to the hopes of its mountaineers.

But this state of public feeling is rapidly passing away; the selfish policy of class and party interests is fading before others of greater worth and magnitude. The time is approaching when the policy of England towards Russia will be determined on higher grounds than those of national rivalry, or of commercial interests. For this it is necessary that more

light should be thrown both upon the system of its government, and the effect of it upon its people, and to this knowledge, in the following pages, the author is striving to contribute.

The space which these volumes have prescribed to the writer has not enabled him fully to point out the comparative strength of the Russian empire, as contrasted with that of France and England. Some fragments of the matter contained in this first portion of the work have appeared in a rough form in the pages of the "new Monthly" and "United Service" Magazines. In conclusion, it is necessary to explain to the reader who may be puzzled at the difference in the spelling of Russian names to that which he may elsewhere have met with, that, to a certain extent, this spelling is arbitrary, because we have no letters which exactly render the sound of some of those of the Russian alphabet; and that wherever he has made use of figures, he has generally given round numbers—firstly, because less confusing; and secondly, because it would have been ridiculous to load the memory of the reader with tens and units—an attempt at unattainable accuracy, which may be considered as the poetry of all *bonâ fide* statistics, but which it would be absurd to look for in those of the Russian empire—always purposely falsified in some of the corrupt channels through which they flow into publicity.

THE AUTHOR.

London, August, 1844.

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REVELATIONS OF RUSSIA.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

It is surprising how little the social and political condition of the Russian empire is known, comprising as it does the largest portion of the habitable globe ever united under one dominion, and giving umbrage as it does to so many interests by the shadow of its still increasing greatness.

There are, no doubt, many causes which may partially account for this lack of information on a theme so interesting ; and, at least till recently, no traveller had given any account from which the faintest idea of her modern condition could be gathered.

If we pass in review the best recent books upon the Russian empire, (and the more recent are the most complete,) Bremner, Kohl, and the ' Letters from the

Baltic," we can glean from them no information on all that is most remarkable in this singular despotism. Its most interesting features are wholly neglected in the picture, or where rarely introduced, are contradictory and distorted.

There are perhaps fewer writers than one is apt to imagine, who are capable of giving anything like a correct idea of a government or a people; and on reflection we shall find such knowledge as we possess on other nations, much less derived from the books of travellers than from their own press, and that increasing social intercourse which is daily wearing down the angularities of prejudice. Although our own constitution, manners, and customs, invite the investigation of foreigners by their publicity, what nonsense has not been written on England, by grave German professors and French ex-cabinet ministers?

There are few travellers of the calibre of Charles Dupin, Tocqueville, and Gustave de Beaumont. To this we must add that, in the Russian empire, the mask of snow which is worn for half the year by nature is only emblematical of that which disguises all her institutions. A government, of which the head centres entirely in one human being, is influenced through all its vast body by the feelings and vanity of the individual. The sovereigns of Russia, setting aside its political value (which is great), have always been sensitive to the public opinion of Europe. The Emperor Nicholas, whose every wish is law, whose smile is sunshine to sixty millions of his subjects, and in the wake of whose awful frown follow death and ruin, the expatriation of whole races, and the extirpation of time-honoured creeds—the Emperor

Nicholas winces beneath the censure of the foreign press, in impotent rage.

Concealment from foreigners of everything that will not bear publicity and praise is therefore, in their mutual intercourse, the end and aim of all connected with the government, and of all who dread its legions of spies; in which categories the whole nation may be said to be comprised.

This concealment is so much the more easy that Russia is, *par excellence*, the country of DECEIT. The chief course of government consists in the attempts of the governed to deceive its agents; of its agents, through every scale of the ladder, to deceive the emperor; and on the part of the emperor, to impose upon one part of his people the belief that he is the chosen of Heaven, the representative of the Godhead upon earth, the living providence; on the other, the notion that he is the man of destiny, against whose power and fortune all resistance would be hopeless.

There have been such things in Russia as villages built up of boards; like stage scenery in the distance, in desolate districts, which an autocrat has said shall be peopled; sets of sleek and smiling peasants, with all their household comforts, have been driven a few posts in advance of a Russian sovereign, all ready to be surprised at an abundant meal, in homes which they had inhabited but an hour. There is at the present day, in most kitchens of government establishments, a mess of broth, always kept warm, of which the emperor tastes when playing Peter the Great, and *seeing all with his own eyes*, he *surprises* it with a visit!

It is not two years since we have seen the Emperor

Nicholas taking from a convent of a sect of the *United Church*, the real cross on which the Saviour of the world was crucified, borrowing the accumulated offerings of the faithful, and afterwards, in Moscow, and the church of our Lady of Kasan, in St. Petersburg, testifying on his bended imperial knees his veneration of this relic, which was exposed to receive the further offerings of the pious.

All this may at least account for the difficulties of obtaining information, in the Russian empire, on all subjects on which information is really interesting. The admirably written "*Letters from the Baltic*," the production of a female pen, only lead us to lament that the fair authoress who has so charmingly described the little she has seen, should have seen so very little. For instance, she professes to depict the Baltic provinces—of which she imbibed her notions in the society of the family of the chief of the secret police; and as she seems impartially to have described all that she saw and learned, we must conclude from her silence that she was ignorant of two of the most interesting facts connected with the very provinces which she describes—viz., that the peasantry recently emancipated from slavery, and still held practically in bondage by their nobility, are a totally distinct race from these latter, the descendants of the Teutonic knights who conquered them, or the Swedish conquerors of these feudal nobles; that they bear to them a sullen and unmitigated hatred, which absorbs their natural aversion to the Muscovites, and that it is by playing off the hatred of the conquered people and the fears of their feudal masters against each other, that the cabinet of St. Petersburg considers itself safe in the possession of these provinces.

Secondly, that, in pursuance of this policy, the very year in which our authoress visited this part of the world, it was the scene of a sanguinary "Jacquerie," excited by a Russian bishop, but carried too far by the enraged peasantry. Hundreds of lives were lost in this insurrection; the insurgents burning the estates and massacring the families of their masters, and being only put down by a military force.

These scenes must have taken place a few miles from the spot which appeared to the writer in question so smiling and so happy, without her hearing of them; and those only who have been in Russia can understand how bold any casual visitor to the family in which she was domesticated must have been, who would have ventured to have breathed a syllable on such topics in the atmosphere which she inhaled.

Kohl, the German traveller, has continued his Russian sketches. The style of his writings gives one no means of judging whether he possesses the sagacity required for a profound, though he is a very minute observer;—his work is a daguerreotype of all that externally meets the eye in shops, in market-places, in streets, and in churches. It is the description of the exterior of a pyramid, brick by brick, which gives us no idea of its magnitude, purposes, or form; but this happens to be precisely what is least interesting in Russia.

Indeed, it is futile to expect any vigorous description of the Russian empire, and the condition of its people, from a German pen, because no German dares to publish it; or if he did so, it would be excluded both from Austria and Prussia;—from Austria, because the censure which, to be sincere, he must heap on a

despotic government, would be displeasing to her; from Prussia, because the censorship will allow nothing to be published more severe than an occasional diatribe against Russia on the question of frontier regulations, and because she is too much under the influence of Russia to allow the publication of any serious writing which might form a ground of complaint from her cabinet.

Lastly, but not least, we have the book of the brilliant Marquis de Custine. It is but some chapters of impressions, to which the reader is apt to give the less credit because couched in poetic language. The marquis came to Russia predetermined to approve, and certainly with no booklearning on the subject, to induce him to prejudge the matter. He calls the Slavonians, "white Arabs!" He confounds the tame, servile, feeble, sallow, rye-fed Muscovite, with the restless, enduring, carnivorous, quick-eyed Cossac. He talks of the Finns*—aborigines of all the north of Europe and Asia, inhabiting, as an almost unmixed race, a tract of country extending from St. Petersburg

* The Finns, near whom the Russians built their capital, are of Scythian origin. They are still little better than heathen, and so wild that, as lately as 1836, a ukase was issued, enjoining the priest to add a family name to the name of the saint given by him to a child which he baptizes. Where the family does not exist, of what use can it be to designate it? This race is without physiognomy; the middle of the face is flat, and this renders the features deformed. These ugly, filthy creatures are, I am told, very strong; they are not the less mean-looking, low in stature, and poor. Though natives of the country, few of them are to be seen in Petersburg; they live in the environs, in swampy plains, and on low granitic hills, rarely coming to the city but on market days.—*Custine's Russia.*

nine hundred miles to the Gulf of Bothnia, and the Swedish frontier; a people converted to Christianity since the twelfth century, numbering on the very territory of Finland Proper near a million and a half, having a language of their own, a celebrated epic that dates back earlier than the Roman empire, and since the time of Gustav Wasa, pious Lutherans, who have in every village a minister acquainted with the dead, the Swedish, and often German languages; a people whose regiments (the first in Europe that ever wore a uniform) were the right arm of Gustav Adolph's armies;—these Finns the Marquis de Custine treats as the scattered remnant of a barbarous horde still lingering in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg, and hardly in 1836 converted from paganism. ✓

But Finland, although Russian, is not Russia, and our author had not travelled in Finland, but in Russia Proper, which he did run hastily through, and where he describes what he heard and saw. He has displayed an extraordinary sagacity, a marvellous rapidity of vision and penetration, in the judgment he has formed on the character of the emperor, and the condition of his empire, and people; as if instinctively, beneath the stage effect of scenery, of costume, and of studied parts, he has detected the misery, the oppression, and the tinsel-covered leprosy • corroding the heart of a people. If the marquis has fallen into a few glaring errors, they in no way affect the case he has made out; and we have no hesitation in saying, that his volumes convey more information on the condition of Russia than all that has been previously published put together.

But if so intuitively, as it would almost appear,

correct in his notions of men and things, the information the marquis affords is incomplete; and although he has furnished more than all his predecessors, we imagine much to be still wanting. Although the following pages were written before the author had seen the Marquis de Custine's work, many parts will probably strike the reader as a key and explanation to events and scenes to which he has therein alluded. For instance, he gives us a personal conversation with the Emperor Nicholas, wherein the autocrat describes to him his conduct and feelings on the eventful day of the 26th of December, 1825, which ushered in his succession to the throne by a military revolt. With the particulars of the event he appears to have been little acquainted, and states them very meagrely: neither does he mention that this outbreak was the eruption of a vast conspiracy, which had been for years silently mining the throne. To the history of the conspiracy, and of its suppression, a couple of chapters will be found devoted in the following pages.

In conclusion, the author is bound to state, that to the Marquis de Custine, independently of the gratification that must be derived from the perusal of his book, another debt of gratitude is owing from every Englishman, and indeed from every friend of humanity; we allude to its effect in enlightening the French public, and thereby diminishing a hope which the whole policy of the Emperor Nicholas will shew him to have entertained, of interesting the ambition or national antipathies of that people, so far as to make them forget, in a common cause, their hatred of despotism.

All who have read his book with interest, cannot

fail to take some in the perusal of those explanatory chapters to which the author has alluded; but independently of this borrowed light, he will have to lay before the reader facts and opinions, startling to those who have been limited in their channels of information to books and travels hitherto published. It will be his own fault if these pages should fail to inspire interest.

He has to paint in them an extraordinary picture, in which all the main features have not only appeared dim and varying in the distance, but have mostly changed and altered in their character. He must pourtray a foreign sovereign, alien in race and feeling to the country he governs, insatiable in the ambition of his views, and reckless of the price humanity must pay for their accomplishment. He must shew this man commanding all the arts of enlightenment and civilization, and ruling over at least fifty millions of barbarian slaves; a people oppressed and suffering for the most part, but who, regarding him as the followers of Zoroaster did the Spirit of Good, only look to him the more reverently in the hope engendered of their misery, all unconscious that it is the imperial heel upon the necks of their lords which makes these press so heavily upon themselves. In their ignorance, as in their prayers, his name and power are confounded with those of God; to their eyes he has grasped the keys of earth and heaven; he is the Timur and the Grand Lama, the omnipotent master, and the highest spiritual authority. The power of the Arabian caliphs was less than his, when, from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, the first successors of the Prophet were still obeyed, because the caliphs were still bound by

the law of the Koran; the emperor's word is an ukase, and an ukase the supremest law.

When these slaves, ground down by oppression, rise upon their masters, and roast, and boil, and disembowel them, they have always the name of the emperor in their mouths. By this peasantry, one in language and feeling, the emperor is beloved; not personally beloved, because whoever is emperor is so. Even Ivan the Terrible, the most cruel monster that ever disgraced humanity, was the pride of his people, at a time when the tsars were mere temporal princes:—the tsar is now both tsar and patriarch.

He is beloved in the same manner, with the same superstitious veneration, as we have seen the hideous and cruel idols of many nations loved and worshipped, if this compound of hope and fear can be called love. He is so, because he is the arbiter of doom and destiny—the terror, the distributor of retribution, to those who oppress his worshippers.

But, unhappily, the affection which benevolence can inspire, even with a people most widely differing from the natural servility of the Muscovites, produces but a faint influence, compared to that which superstition and fanaticism may give birth. The moral influence of the emperor, at least on the great bulk of this class, is as absolute and unlimited as his political authority. The immense territory which he possesses in Europe, and on which the race (the main sinew of his strength) is settled, is not a comparatively barren expanse, like Prussia and Poland; it is a rich rank soil, still unredeemed, in its greatest extent, from the morass and forests which cover its natural riches. His fifty millions are not only devoted, but a wise direction would make them wealthy.

These are not all the elements of the emperor's strength; he has at his back the Cossacs, with their nations of horsemen; they, in a different way, are as devoted to him as the hunting hound to the hunter who cbeers him on.

The Cossacs are daily reclaiming for him the Mongol and Tartar tribes, scattered over the three thousand miles of prairie that border the parallel line of lakes and deserts that divides Northern from Southern Asia. Just as we have seen the wildest species of bird and the hunting leopards trained to the purposes of man, are the Tartar tribes attempted to be organized. None but Cossacs or Tartars can live in the broad zone of desert that divides the Asiatic regions.

The Mongols and Tartars were no more civilized, no more warlike, no more numerous, when, under Nader Schah and Timour, they ravaged a large portion of the earth, and under the latter are said to have put to death eighteen millions of human beings; only they were then united. The policy of the tsars unites them tribe by tribe, as they become accustomed to the hood and lure. The Emperor of Russia, if he could feed them, might unite half a million of horsemen!

He has, besides, kingdoms, grand duchies, and fleets, which add to his influence, and therefore, through a moral agency, to his power, although physically weakening it.

The author will therefore have to shew this man wielding elements of power to which there is no parallel in history—that of Sesostriis, of Xerxes, of Attila, of Timour, fading into insignificance beside it;

he will have to shew that, *now*, there is no aristocracy whose hatred can give any umbrage to his power, and that the "check-string to aristocratic power which wound around a despot's neck, and was held at its extremities by the nobles," has no longer existence. He will shew the last long preparation of a struggle betwixt the autocrat and the remains of the old Boyar, which, threatening to be a Titanic combat, and ending in a battle of mice and frogs, has left him undisputed master.

This mighty sovereign is not so wedded to his imperial dignity as to neglect the arts of policy and dissimulation; he is not weakened by such scruples. When policy dictated, he could act and fawn to Lord Durham, smile at the blunt observation that would have doomed the first of his magnates to Siberia, and flatter and caress until he had won even the cold, distant Englishman—nay, he could subdue by civilities a writer of the "*Journal des Debats*." He could sacrifice his animosities sufficiently to conquer in the same manner, by alternate threats and flattery, when prince royal, the present King of Prussia, although the same prince royal had shown himself his bitterest enemy, threatening his own father with a judgment for giving a Prussian princess to a heathen and barbarian; and he is perhaps overweening in estimating his own powers of conciliation—as his sudden visit to Stockholm, and that which he now proposes to pay, and perhaps will have paid, Great Britain; before these pages can appear in print, may indicate.

We shall next have to shew how he has used this mighty authority and these mighty elements of power

—like an Egyptian, Assyrian, or Babylonian prince—to transport the population of a vast conquered nation by degrees into his Siberian deserts, as he is doing by Poland; to decree the annihilation of the creed of hundreds of thousands, sending the recusants to perish on that long journey eastward, where the very circumstances of their martyrdom must remain unknown, as he has done by the United Greeks, a sect of Roman Catholics, whose priests, torn from their flock, and chained side by side, wander and die, stage by stage, on the road to Tobolsk, because an imperial ukase had united them to the Russian church; by a single edict, to drive all the Polish Jews from their abode on the frontier, on which the feuds, cruelties, and caprice of the middle ages had allowed them to retain a home, in the depth of winter, without distinction of sex or age, at the mercy of an organized banditti, into distant and unknown provinces, a prey to the rapacity, extortion, cruelty, and insults of a Russian police.

We must shew what this Emperor Nicholas, the signer of treaties to suppress the slave-trade, the great emancipator of the peasant serfs, has made the condition of those serfs when emancipated; how from being serfs of a lord they become serfs of the crown; how from being the slaves of slaves, they become simple slaves of his own domain.

But lest perhaps even this should prove an advance towards freedom, in as far as it simplified the complication of servitude, we shall shew the Emperor Nicholas sacrificing to the spirit of Oriental despotism, of which his empire is a vast monument, by tightening the bonds of other classes, and ruthlessly annihilating the

faint liberty which custom or policy still allowed to many classes of his subjects. He has placed his nobility in a condition almost as abject as their serfs, and sternly keeps them within the vast prison-house which he has rendered so intolerable. He has deprived the Cossacs of the Don of their liberties and privileges. First of the many tribes of Cossacs who conquered Siberia and the Steppes, in which the Muscovite would have been as much lost as he is upon the ocean, the Don Cossac has always served the empire zealously; he only craved, like all the other tribes of his brethren, the freedom of serving it in his own manner. He was allowed to do so as long as he was feared, like the rest of his brethren; but no sooner had the Muscovite population thickened around him, than Nicholas deprived him at once of his privileges. In Finland, which, obtained through fraud and violence by his predecessor, policy had endeavoured to attach by a mild government, and the promises of a constitution confirmed by the imperial oath—in Finland, the Emperor Nicholas grew impatient of seeing its gentle people so indulgently handled. Finland is being now governed like Russia.

Having shown this mighty Moloch to his readers, the author will then have to point out a little worm which is cankering his stupendous power—engendered, like other worms too, of corruption—the vast limbs rather, as yet, weakening than strengthening the ponderous body to which they are attached,—the useless fleet, the immense but inefficient army. He will have to shew wonderful elements of power which have been disregarded, and the illusory nature of those which excite the apprehensions of her neighbours. As all,

however, look formidable in the fearful pageant, all are alike arms in the hands of her skilful agents and diplomatists; and a period of peace is, for Russia, a period of wide and hazardless conquests.

Where war would interrupt, peace is daily realizing the dreams of Russian ambition, or we should rather say, of the Russian autocrat's ambition, for all the arts of the governing have failed in raising any thirst for conquest or ambition in the Russian people. Courtiers, and that unfortunate class of them, unknown in other lands, whose servility is inspired only by the hope of avoiding persecution, may affect to call themselves, with enthusiasm, the modern Romans, for the purpose of flattering power; or when taunted by the reproaches of foreigners with their abject condition, they may be stung to retort—"At least you fear, and you shall fear us." But allow them to speak out, beyond the reach of spies, and you will find that they would welcome the dominion of the Tartar, Turk, or Pole, so that they could only be relieved from the benumbing tyranny which presses on them like a nightmare.

There is evidently a certain point of oppression beneath which the enduring feeling of patriotism and national pride withers and ceases to exist. It is so in the empire of the tsar. The serf might indeed be led, by his ignorance and superstition, to take an active part in a war of foreign conquest, but it would always be unconsciously, always in the belief that he was defending, not attacking. We must therefore not only hold the whole Russian people guiltless of its cabinet's ambition, but we must never admit, in reasoning of the designs of their government, an argument

which with all others ought to be so full of weight—namely, the improbability of any canvassed line of conduct, because of its incompatibility with the national interest.

There is no national, no Russian interest; there is only the interest of the house of Romanoff. Russia is a mere possession of the emperor and his family; it is a vast and important one, but the time is looked forward to when it may become comparatively insignificant. It is therefore obvious that its interests as a nation may be at variance with, and sacrificed to those of its possessor. The Russian is the only sovereignty in the world where the advantage of the governed and the governing, blind as the latter may often be in perceiving it, are not indissolubly identified. The Russian cabinet is a collection of servants who have no object but to serve a master, and to carry out his designs; it is influenced by none of the contradictory interests which distract a constitutional ministry. The terror of its vicinity, and of a power which looms still more gigantic in its indistinctness—the patient and enduring foresight of its intrigues, which play off the fears of petty states against private interests—enable it to make that silent progress which, without obtruding itself on publicity, becomes startling and incontrovertible when our attention is directed towards it. During a time of profound peace, Russian influence gains ground, and she conquers, not because of the power she *does possess*, but of that which she is *thought to possess*.

The suspicion of his subjects which the late King of Sweden entertained to the last, gave Russia all the ascendancy at Stockholm that it was possible for

her to possess in a constitutional country. In Prussia, her present sovereign, led away by his fears for his Rhenish provinces, and the hope of being able to walk alone when he should have obtained that ascendancy over the petty German states which he hoped to dispute with Austria, entered into a strict alliance (so repugnant to his natural feelings and personal antipathies) with the Russian cabinet: he has surrendered himself as Faust to Mephistopheles; coil after coil winds around him, and compromises his position in that civilized Europe in which he would have wished to play the liberal leader, whilst retaining the power and the sweets of despotism; and its Byzantine craft must smile as it sees the very advantages for which he prostituted his obeisance and dignity escaping from his expectant grasp into its own; for whilst the sovereign of Prussia leaned for support on Nicholas to take a prominent lead amongst the German states, in the visionary hope of uniting and heading a homogeneous German people, Nicholas himself, by marriages, intrigues, and bribes, has made that progress for his own interests, to effect which the Prussian cabinet sold itself to him.

These silent advances may easily be denied; a small portion only of the subterranean march can ever be adduced in evidence. A little while back the Zollverein and the severity of the Prussian censorship, which did not allow the publication of articles against Russia which it would even have permitted against its own government, were the only ostensible proofs of Russian influence; we have since seen Prussia submit to the bitter humiliation of acceding to the emperor's imperious demand of expelling the Polish refugees.

We have seen the government of Sweden—Sweden, the country where hate of Russia is imbibed by the child with its mother's milk—refusing to admit the Polish exiles. Has not the influence of Russia been recently powerful, and hardly yet defeated, in the Morea? Is it not still in Turkey a hundred times greater than the terror of her real strength can warrant? Has not Russia being making progress to obtain a family interest in the reversion to the Danish throne—that interest which a powerful state may expect to gain over a feeble one through family connexion, but which is now felt to be unattainable through the alliance with great princely houses? Nicholas has one child married to a rejeton of the Napoleons, another to the presumed heir to the throne of Denmark; intermarriages with the families of petty German states have comprised the other alliances of his house.

There are those who, admitting the oriental despotism of the Russian government, look upon Nicholas as one of those vigorous reformers who, by stern and energetic means, abolish great abuses, and pave the way to the happiness of a people by acts harsh and unjustifiable—who consider him the man fit to rule over and regenerate his semi-barbarous people. The terseness of this not very original judgment has always, wherever it has been applied in history, been greater than its truth. It was not tyranny and cruelty that redeemed from barbarism the inhabitants of Attica and Italy, and they can never be necessary instruments of such reform.

On the other hand, Nicholas is rendering the lot of that portion of the human race inhabiting his do-

minions every hour more miserable. His tyranny, if not greater, is better organized and more complete, than that of his predecessors. It is the savage who has borrowed the knowledge of anatomy and surgery to torture more effectively. His system is, to crush down all beneath him to the same ignoble level, to fetter thought, speech, and mind, and to degrade the races now beneath his rule, as well as those over which he is striving to extend it, to the condition of the Chinese, but Chinese drilled, disciplined, and pipe-clayed.

In alluding to the ambition of the *owner* of the Russian empire, the author must not be understood as censuring it for itself, but for its baneful effects; since ambition, for a sovereign or a people, has always been, not only the infallible accompaniment of a consciousness of vigour, but, as with individuals, the great motive power which, as directed, may have led to good or evil. This common-place outcry against Russia, branding her with insatiable views of aggrandizement, everywhere absurd, is especially so in England. If ambition and aggrandizement be censurable in themselves, of all people we should be the last to throw the stone. A few years since John Bull was almost startled from his apathy by a map published in this spirit, shewing the conquests of Russia within a century; millions of square miles, fertile and desert, inhabited by millions of human beings; but it never struck those who had roused his indignation, to lay before him a similar account of the territories or the subjects Great Britain had become possessed of during the same period, though the former far exceeded the

acquisitions of Russia, and the latter outnumbered them manifold.

The ambition of the tsar may be no greater than that of England, and will probably be eventually less successful; but the effects of these ambitions are likely to be very different. In the wake of that of England follows inevitable civilization. The rule of Russia, always essentially demoralizing, is becoming, under Nicholas, more so every day. Beneath it both civilized and intellectual classes, or whole nations, sink into the condition of the present Pera or the old Byzantine Greeks; those already rude and barbarous become only more sunken and brutalized, adding the vices of civilization to those of their former condition.

When Nicholas dies, is the system which has outlived so many reigns, and which he is so vigorously carrying out, likely to die with him?

We must assume a higher ground than that of national feeling or national jealousy, and survey from the point of view of the interests of humanity, to have the right to stigmatize as it deserves the progress and attempted progress of Russian power.

When we look to the blood shed in India and China, and to our countless usurpations, those who would hold more sacred national vanities, and the rights of states and princes, than the rights of the human race, may exclaim *that evil should not be done even that good may come of it*. But we must at least admit as a mitigation the fact which excuses and may even render meritorious in other eyes the aggression and the conquest—namely, that it must eventually conduce to the happiness and well-being of the subjected people. But what are they to say of *evil done that further evil may come of it*?—of the conquests

and extension of an empire which is to increase instead of alleviating the miseries of humanity?

In pointing out the feet of clay, as well as in showing the front of brass, of the Colossus which moves obedient to the wishes of one single heart and brain, the author forewarns his readers that the results of personal observation will probably shock many of their preconceived ideas, gathered perhaps from the misconceptions of one traveller which those succeeding him have traditionally repeated. The very notions of the Muscovites—which the reader may as long have mentally associated with his name as the beard, and boots, and caftan that he wears—namely, his fierce warlike spirit and great hardihood and vigour,—the author will have to disturb, by depicting the most peaceful and physically the least enduring if the most patient race in Europe.

Before proceeding to the special facts developed in succeeding chapters, the author considers the general want of information on the subject he is treating as warranting him in submitting to the reader a sort of elementary account of the Russian empire, and of the man to whom, with the sixty millions of men it contains, it as completely belongs as the reader's horse or spaniel to himself; with this difference—that there are laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and societies for the enforcement of them, which constitute some check upon him, whilst a Russian tsar is untrammelled by any.

CHAPTER II.

THE EMPEROR AND HIS SUBJECTS.

If it were not for the avowed and unlimited despotism of the Russian government,—her civil institutions, her written laws, the provident regulations of the Russian empire, the official accounts giving the minutest details of her progress and prosperity, which seem in the most triumphant manner to justify the wisdom of these, would make the country appear, on paper, the realization of a modern Utopia. Unfortunately, however, these official accounts, both with regard to the prosperity and happiness of the Russian people, and her political power, are as far from the reality as is the value of her bank-notes from the metallic currency which they nominally represent. It is, however, by such papers that the Russian government deceives, and is deceived. No country ever existed which was ever administered by such ridiculously copious and complex written details, without which the most insignificant act of public business cannot be carried on.

This system, originally devised as a check on those

employed, by placing on record, in black and white, the minutest details of everything connected with their duty, has had the contrary effect of insuring impunity, by burying every transaction in such an inextricably voluminous mass of documents, as to prove an effectual shelter for every species of fraud, which is protected, not here and there, or occasionally, but by high and low, and with a nefarious order and regularity similar to that which, in great capitals, associations of thieves are conducted.

Russia possesses wise laws and excellent regulations, which are, in fact, a dead letter; she has thousands of troops which have never existed but upon paper; she has fleets and manufactories which, like the scenery of a stage, excepting for theatrical effect, are of no more use or value to the nation than if they too existed only in black and white.

The real elements of power and greatness which she possesses are, notwithstanding all this, immense; though there are countervailing causes which have hitherto prevented, and probably will continue to prevent, their ever coming into such active operation as to contribute much to her prosperity, or to render formidable her preponderance.

Though innumerable tribes and nations live beneath the rule of the Russian empire, differing as much in language and in habits as any of the human race, the great bulk of her population is Muscovite, speaking the same tongue, professing the same religion, and animated by the same feelings of nationality. In the immense extent of country through which this population is scattered, and which industrious cultivation would render prodigiously fertile, it cannot fail to in-

crease into countless millions, as it has been increasing since it has enjoyed the common protection of a somewhat civilized government. Without, however, anticipating what this population may become, to take it as it is, these millions of peasants, contented in their ignorance, and devoted with a blind and superstitious attachment to a sovereign who unites in his person, as head of the church, its spiritual authority to that of the temporal chief and tsar, and who possesses besides all the mechanism of centralization and the science of civilization at his command, to render this force available,—let us ask, was there ever a power more formidable centered in the hands of a man than that which at the present day thus lies at the unlimited and uncontrolled command of an emperor of Russia? If till this moment his people have been poor, the soil of his country contains in profusion every requisite to constitute agricultural wealth, to furnish a superabundance of every valuable European production. The riches are there, and within reach. The arms are there to work them out. The imperial policy, which would have impoverished other nations, has only partially prevented the Russians from realizing wealth. In his European possessions, inhabited by the purely Muscovite race, there are tracts of land many times larger than France and England, where the soil is as rich as in those parts of Brabant and Flanders wherein the population seems to cluster like bees about a hive. There are pastures which, with a little industry, might feed all the flocks and cattle in Europe. Nature, by means of winter sledge roads and immense navigable rivers, has opened many communications, and singularly facilitated others.

The climate over two-thirds of her European empire is, taken all in all, more favourable than otherwise to her prosperity ; and she possesses outlets to two of the great inland seas of Europe, the Black Sea and the Gulf of Finland ; the Caspian Sea, in the heart of Asia, and the White Sea, in the polar regions, are connected by inland navigation ; the Russian flag floats over nearly a thousand miles of the shores of the Baltic, and a considerable part of the coast of the Euxine.

No aristocracy interferes, no public opinion raises its voice, to check or to cramp the exercise of imperial authority. The nobles of Russia, proprietors of the soil, though they hold the peasantry in a servitude as complete as was that of the West Indian negroes, though still wealthy, are yet not only without a shadow of political power, but are themselves deprived of many of the common rights of humanity. Too often the oppressors of their peasantry, they constitute, notwithstanding, the class on whom the yoke of despotism presses most gallingly, if not most heavily. It has been the policy of the crown, particularly in the two last reigns, and in the present, to redeem the serf from the vassalage of his baron, and render him an imperial instead of a private slave—a servitude which is in most cases merely nominal, that is to say, when he is not forced to work in the government manufactories. He pays a fixed and trifling poll-tax to the emperor, instead of the heavy and optional one imposed on him by his former master, and he is practically almost as free as his late lord can possibly be, excepting in as far as his late lord may have earned superior rank in the service. But do not let the

reader imagine that this is a state of freedom which would be tolerated by any other people. No; the result has been obtained, not by raising the slave, but by crushing down the lord to his level.

The service of the crown, whether civil or military, for which every proprietor of land must furnish an annual contingent of men, at the expiration of its duration exempts those who have performed it, as well as their descendants, from private servitude. Thus, in the eyes of the peasantry, the emperor, whose authority is always stepping in to release them from a bondage often very oppressive, appears in so favourable a light, that the rooted subserviency of long habit to their masters, unmixed with any sympathy or affection, would constitute no motive to divert them from a blind obedience to the being they look upon as scarce inferior to God; and between their duty to their baron and their emperor, the latter would, in every case, be the more popular as well as the more sacred.

The emperors of Russia seek to invest themselves with this sacred character, in the eyes of the vulgar, by every imaginable means. The peasant and the soldier are taught always to associate the name of God and of the emperor; and the soldier, in the regulation prayers, is made to call the emperor, "*Our God upon earth.*"

It is a common prejudice in other countries to imagine that the fear of the nobility operates as a check on the conduct of the sovereign of Russia, and that the summary process of assassination would be the meed of any very oppressive or obnoxious measures. This notion is utterly erroneous. In a coun-

try like Russia, where habits and feelings are pervaded more by an oriental than an European spirit, as in every unenlightened despotism (if we may be allowed to use the term in contradistinction to the self-styled *enlightened despotism* of another European state,) the sword of assassination must hang perpetually suspended over the good sovereign as well as the wicked. He has to dread, not like a constitutional king, the fanaticism of a jacobinical club, or secret assassin, but those whom he has raised to power, whether from the class of nobility or peasantry. It is perfectly immaterial what their original rank may have been, though it is true that whilst in office they constitute a kind of aristocracy—the only one which has any political existence in Russia, any more than in Persia or in Turkey, where slaves and camel-drivers rise to the highest offices, and where the favour of the sovereign confers the only distinction.

A gloomy and distrustful tyrant, like Paul, must sometimes be strangled by his immediate confidants, in self-defence, when these become the objects of his suspicion; a weak-minded but benevolent emperor, like Alexander, may have perished at the hands of those who have not the justification of necessity's—stern law; and the best of monarchs may fall a victim to the despair of those to whom he has intrusted his power, when the detection of their misdeeds becomes inevitable, or even when their ambitious views render a change advantageous.

The veil of mystery and secrecy which is habitually thrown over everything, renders the concealment and impunity of crimes practicable, which, in the rest of Europe, must meet with immediate publicity and

execration. The public mind is so impressed with the facility of hiding every dark transaction from its view, that no personage of importance dies without some rumour of poison or foul play. In the present reign we may instance the deaths of the Grand Duke Constantine and General Diebitch.

There is a certain individual on whom the public rumour affixes the stigma of being the instrument of these dark deeds. His visit to any public characters, or his arrival at the place where they were, has, in so many instances, been the forerunner of their sudden dissolution, that in such a country the report can excite little surprise. Shortly before the respective deaths of Alexander, of Constantine, and of Diebitch, this bird of ill omen is said to have made his appearance; and four or five other similar instances are cited in corroboration of this tale.*

* "Puis-je vous offrir de l'eau de Seltz !" once said this personage to an individual seated at the same table, who had called for some of the mineral water. "Cela pourrait être de l'acqua Tofana," replied the stranger. The former turned deadly pale, rose, and departed. It is a strange circumstance that the founder of the fortune of his family was the principal agent concerned in the assassination of Peter the Third, the legitimate grandfather of the Emperor Nicholas, who was murdered at the instigation of Catherine his wife, the undoubted grandmother of the present sovereign, in his palace of Peterhoff, eighty-two years ago, and therefore thirty years before his father Paul was strangled in the Michel palace. This man's progenitor first gave the unhappy Peter poison in a glass of brandy, and afterwards kneeled upon his breast, while the Princes Bariatski and Potemkin strangled him with a napkin. It is of another taciturn member of this family, who, brought up on the banks of the Don, had acquired its peculiar accent, that the witty N— said, "Si — n'a pas le don de la parole, il a la parole du Don."

The prevalence of these rumours on every occasion is not a little fostered by the absurdly mysterious policy of government, which will not allow the introduction of, or at least previously causes the obnoxious pages to be cut out of, any works mentioning any of the murders which have taken place in the imperial family since the time of Peter, even to the assassination of Paul, although the latter is known in all its details, as well as any other public event.

If the nobility are thus utterly powerless, the clergy, at one time equally formidable to the tsar, and whose influence might still be imagined to be so with a people blindly superstitious, has been converted by the wise and resolute policy of succeeding reigns, from an object of terror into a means of power.

Deprived of the remotest political weight, its sole effect is to propagate and strengthen those religious feelings amongst the people which can but render them more subservient to the emperor, who is head of the church, and whose authority is not looked upon in the same light in which the members of the church of England regard the supremacy of the British sovereign—as a mere nominal title but rather with the implicit belief of a direct delegation of power from Heaven, of the same nature as, in the eyes of the Roman Catholic, invested even the most ambitious and martial pontiffs with so sacred a character.

The Russian people may most naturally be divided into three great classes—viz., first, the landed aristocracy; second, all those who have been or are employed by government; third, the peasantry, whether private serfs, crown serfs, or freedmen.

The first of these classes, more polished than civi-

lized, generally given to licentiousness and extravagance, and crushed by a sense of its humiliating condition, is insignificant by its want of spirit and numbers, and by the fact of a paramount influence, which destroys that which it once possessed over its serfs, and which it has not even the means of counteracting by the dissemination amongst them of such enlarged and liberal ideas as its own comparative civilization might suggest, and which might weaken the power of that arbitrary tyranny which is weighing it down, though without strengthening its own. Its members must therefore naturally bear in their hearts a bitter enmity to the oriental despotism which crushes them in the dust. At the close of the late Emperor Alexander's reign, they made a final effort to shake off this galling tyranny, and the numerous secret societies which were conspiring against the imperial authority, included in their ranks some scion of every noble family in the empire, and with each were the hearts and wishes of the stock to which he belonged. These efforts terminated in a hasty and pusillanimously conducted attempt at rebellion on the accession of the present emperor, but he overturned it by his energy, and has since kept his heel upon the throats of the helplessly prostrate aristocracy who attempted to subvert his autocratic power.

This hatred is not, however, perceptible to the casual observations of the traveller; and few lips dare utter it in a state where, Venice-like, the very walls have ears, and it is only on a more intimate acquaintance that he can catch the accent of these universal curses, "not loud, but deep." The conquered nobility may therefore now be considered harmlessly inimical to the imperial crown.

The second class—the nobility of office—raised in the very hotbed of corruption and venality, and divested, not only of all public virtue, but of all private honesty, may be considered incapable of a patriotic idea, and can be animated by none but the most selfish feelings, which would naturally lead them to side with the strongest party, in the event of any national commotion. The inferior ranks of this class, which constitute the great bulk of it, have been brought up traditionally to regard the imperial power as the most solid and unshakeable of human institutions.

The third of these three great classes into which the Russian nation may be naturally divided—many times more numerous than the other two united—constitutes the bulk, the power, and the nerve of the Muscovite people. It is composed of a peasantry on whom civilization has yet made no impression, and knowledge thrown no ray of light. For, that a few can read, who are now allowed to read nothing but those prayers which were formerly read to them, and that they are now acquainted with the use of sugar and tobacco, will scarcely invalidate the assertion which we boldly venture to make—that they are as barbarous now as previously to the days of the first Peter; that they are, in fact, identically the same as a century and a half ago, in ideas, in manners, and in costume; as blindly superstitious, as servilely devoted as then; and have only transferred this feeling from their patriarchs and boyars to the person of a single ruler.

Counting its millions, as this class does, to the thousands of the preceding two, and animated as it is by the blind zeal of barbarism, it lies a ready and tremendous instrument of good or evil, in the hands of

one man, to execute his commands with a reckless and fanatical devotion. This man is the Emperor Nicholas.

If we patiently exhaust the records of the world's past history, maturely and deliberately comparing the position of Nicholas with that of any sovereign who has at any time preceded him, we shall not in any age find a parallel to the fearful elements of power which lie at his disposal. A population of forty to fifty millions of Muscovite peasants look upon him as their "God upon earth;" such being, as it has been observed, the title by which they designate him in their prayers to that Being in whose eyes he is no more than the lowliest of his slaves.

If we could even suppose that, in the less densely peopled world of bygone centuries, any barbarian despot had ever ruled over anything like a similar *number* of devoted followers, blindly obedient to one single leader, no leader in those remote ages, or of those barbarous followers, possessed the same advantages—the mechanism and administration of modern civilization—which the progress of other lands has given the Russian tsar, whereby to render available the unwieldy strength of these inert masses.

To exercise so immediate an influence on the destiny of sixty millions of human beings for whose civilization, happiness, and comfort so much remains to be done, is assuredly the greatest and most noble task that was ever allotted to humanity: for we must admit that the words of the poet,

How few the ills which kings can cause or cure,
are little applicable here.

Having indicated, on the one hand, the causes which would tend to invest a Russian autocrat with apparently stupendous power, it now remains to point out circumstances—arising partly from historical causes, partly from the policy of preceding reigns—which partially neutralize it, and render any rapid or real progress towards power or civilization so difficult, as to require for its accomplishment that such a man should unite in his character the will to do good, with a degree of firmness, perspicuity, and talent, which unfortunately the world has seldom seen united in the hands of uncontrolled power.

Let us first give some account of the man to whom Providence has intrusted this exalted mission. Nicolai Paulovitch, or “Nicholas the son of Paul,” according to the universal habit of Russian nomenclatures, is now in the prime of life. He is of commanding stature, and presents, not only the most imposing aspect of any living sovereign, but, as perfect as he is colossal in the proportions of his form, he may really be ranked amongst the handsomest men of Europe. When the whole of his guard, consisting of sixty thousand of the picked men of his empire, is reviewed by him in the Champ de Mars, the eye of the spectator may vainly wander over its ranks to find any one worthy of comparison with him, for figure, for manly beauty, or for majesty of mien. When he gives the word of command, the deep and sonorous tones of his voice thrill, distinctly audible over the vast plain where an army is manœuvring or a crowd looking on, as different from the voices of his numerous commanders as the notes of an organ from the treble of a child. He is seen, however, to more advantage on

foot than on horseback, because, being a stiff and a very timid rider, the chargers he rides in public have always been "manèged" into the rocking-horse canter of the pitiable beasts which figure in the theatrical circus;—so that in the eyes of an Englishman this circumstance qualifies very materially the admiration his splendid equestrian figure would otherwise excite.

Nicholas has also of late years adopted the habit of staring around him with an air of severity, apparently imagining that his sternness of aspect imposes, whereas, like everything assumed, it has a contrary effect, and rather takes away from the awe which his majestic figure and features cannot fail to excite.

The Emperor Nicholas is, besides, too much of the actor; and it is notwithstanding this mannerism, not because of it, that the reality of his power imposes on his subjects; to the stranger, who is indifferent to his favour or displeasure, it is speedily obvious. The Marquis de Custine says—

"It is easy to see that the emperor cannot forget who he is, nor the constant attention of which he is the object; *il pose incessamment*, (he attudinizes unceasingly)—from whence results that he is never natural when he is sincere. His features have three distinct expressions, not one of which is that of simple benevolence. The most habitual seems to me that of constant severity. Another expression, though more rare, better befits that fine countenance—it is that of solemnity. The third is politeness, and into this glide a few shades of graciousness, which temper the cold astonishment caused by the other two. But notwithstanding this graciousness, there is one thing destroys the moral influence of the man—it is,

that each of these physiognomies, which arbitrarily replace each other on his face, is taken up or cast aside completely, and without leaving any trace of the preceding, whereby to modify the expression of the new. It is a change of scene with upraised curtain, which no transition prepares us for. It appears a mask taken off and put on at pleasure. Do not misunderstand the sense I here attach to the word mask; I use it according to its etymology; in Greek, hypocrite means actor; the hypocrite was the man who masked himself to perform a part. I mean, that the emperor is always mindful of his post, and plays it like a great actor."

Nicholas is said by all who knew him previously to his accession to the throne, to have altered so favourably in his personal appearance, that no one, in the godlike-looking emperor—the crowned Apollo—could recognize the Grand Duke Nicholas. All the portraits taken of him at that period, shewing him tall, slender, and unformed, his features thin and sharp, corroborate this statement.

Of the extent of his general knowledge and acquirements few have the privilege of judging; but, like most princes of the present day, and like all Russians of high rank, he speaks, fluently and without accent, several languages. French and German are familiar to him as the mother-tongue; the English he has learned, like all the other members of the imperial family in the past and present generation, from very illiterate Scotch nurses and attendants, whose homely fidelity has always been appreciated in their nursery, and with whom Nicholas and his empress not unfrequently condescend to drink their tea. From these people the imperial family seem to derive many of

their ideas of the English, and, including the emperor, are evidently grossly ignorant of the condition and the usages of British society. Thus the Grand Duke Michael, the emperor's brother, meets the clergyman of the British factory of St. Petersburg in the streets, and addresses him in English, with "G— d— your eyes! how are you?" This is from no intention to insult, but only from his ignorance, not only of the true bearing of the words he is using, but of the distinctions of society, which prevents his seeing the impropriety of thus expressing even the exuberance of his good humour towards a personage to whom his character as a clergyman renders such expressions indecent from any man on earth.

Domestic and moderate in his habits, few princes have borne a more unblemished private character than the present emperor long had done. A strict lover of justice, when not interfering with his own pretensions or interests, he has, for the first time since the reign of Peter I., endeavoured to enforce its rigid administration according to law, with how little success will be shewn hereafter. Naturally desirous, whenever the weightier personal interests of his family would allow, of improving the material condition of his people and empire, whose well-being, since they belong to him, must be as identified with his own as that of the proprietor with his estate and cattle; and not contented, like his brother Alexander, with the brazen good wishes of an inactive philanthropy, whose indolence rendered the reign of a benevolently-intentioned man sometimes as oppressive as that of his father Paul, Nicholas I. not only *reigns*, but, undismayed by the laborious duties such an undertaking

entails upon him, actually *governs* in person. On the other hand, he seems to entertain the most exalted ideas of the sacredness of his high prerogative and divine right, and the first consideration that actuates him seems to be the maintenance of its integrity. Severe and vindictive, clemency has never shewn itself amongst his virtues.

The character of Nicholas in all these particulars differs widely from that of his mild and liberal minded predecessor, who, appreciating the right and suffering the wrong, because the indolence of his disposition shrank from the task of clearing out the Augean stable, must have entailed upon himself the more fearful responsibility.

Many instances are given, since the accession of the present emperor, of his unforgiving spirit, which even the completest triumph over his enemies does not apparently disarm; witness his treatment of those of the conspirators who disturbed the commencement of his reign, and who were banished to Siberia,—to whose condition, though years have elapsed, no alleviation has been allowed. Thus continuing to make the condemned suffer, where his sufferings can be no example, shews, at the least, a vindictive severity. Towards the Poles, also, his conduct, always harsh, has been in some instances worthy of Ivan the Terrible. These, as well as all political offenders, who are classed with assassins, have been carefully excluded from the amnesties which on several occasions of public festivity have extended a pardon to felons.

Under all circumstances, after the subjugation of Poland, a generous disposition might have contented itself with treating her according to the stern laws of

conquest, not, as Nicholas has done, according to the sanguinary code which established authority arrogate to itself the right of applying to rebellion; for this was scarcely a rebellion crushed, but a country reconquered. Regular armies fought regular armies according to all the usages of international warfare, prisoners of war were made, and communication opened between the chiefs of the contending armies. The emperor himself received the delegates of his adversaries. When, however, he proved the strongest in the struggle, and the war was over, those prisoners who had fought as brave men in the field—who, not submitting to a master, had surrendered on the faith of an exchange, and counting on a reciprocity of treatment—were, against their vows and wishes, made to serve their enemy, and drafted into condemned corps where they were required to take the oath of allegiance to the emperor. Their condition in these particular would of itself have been little preferable to that of British convicts; but their persecutor was not content with the misery of a hopeless servitude, a perpetual exile, thus inflicted on them; they were left the option between taking an oath against their conscience, which would render them participators in their own degradation, or the most fearful corporal sufferings. On refusing to take the oath, they were condemned to receive a number of lashes which alone would have been a fearful punishment for any offence, but still persisting, as they did, one victim after another, each as resolute after as before his martyrdom—as determined in his refusal when he had seen his comrade expire under the lash as when first called out—was it not an unheard of barbarity to renew this

torture at every fresh refusal, till death placed them beyond the power of human cruelty?

This is no exaggerated picture, no overstrained account of an occurrence which took place far in the interior; it is the plain narrative of what occurred, on the termination of the Polish war, in the town of Cronstadt, not twenty miles from St. Petersburg, and precisely the point which holds most uninterrupted communication with western Europe. Several hundred Polish prisoners, employed in working at the fortifications, were required, and almost unanimously refused, to take the oath. They were then made successively "*to run the gauntlet*;" but still in almost every instance they persisted in their refusal, with a resolution worthy of admiration in any cause. Time after time they were thus carried out from the hospital, still unwavering in their heroism, to undergo the same infliction, till life or all sensation had departed from the mangled mass of flesh, which was consigned to the burial-cart, or to linger for weeks in a hospital, till relieved by the tardy kindness of death, or in some few cases to recover in several months, crippled and maimed, to drag on a miserable existence, chained to felons and assassins.

The commission of these barbarities, perpetrated in view of all the inhabitants of Cronstadt, lasted many weeks, and could not have taken place without the imperial knowledge—not to say the imperial command.

Suppressing for a moment the feelings of indignant humanity which this recital must arouse, let us even suppose these victims to have been utterly misguided men, and rebels against the most legitimate and lawful authority; did it not require the ferocity of times

now happily gone by in the greater part of Europe to persecute to such inhuman extremes a pertinacity which proved not to be the dogged obstinacy of an individual mutineer, but which was evidently the generous, even had it been the erroneous, conviction of a whole body, who preferred death and torture to dishonour?

With regard to the personal courage of the emperor it is difficult to judge from the facts one hears, whether one should form a very high estimate of it. There have been instances where he has undoubtedly displayed courage, and others where he has failed to shew any. Of those who have seen much of him some deny his possessing this quality: others attribute it to him in a high degree. We have heard the following circumstance cited in corroboration of both opinions, and leave the reader to draw his own deductions from facts, which must, after all, form the best basis on which every judgment can be formed:—

The very commencement of Nicholas's reign was disturbed by an attempt at revolution. Constantine, on the death of Alexander, after the army had taken the oath of allegiance to him, abdicated the crown in favour of his brother Nicholas. In St. Petersburg, where the latter then was, the whole body of the imperial guards was called together by his order, to take a fresh oath of allegiance to himself; but by a fatal oversight, no preliminary explanation was given on a subject of great gravity to the Russian soldier, who considers his oath in such case not as a mere matter of form, but as entailing on him the most sacred obligations of fidelity. A party, comprising a large portion of the Russian nobility, who had long

been conspiring to introduce a constitutional form of government into Russia, and to whom Nicholas was particularly obnoxious, seized eagerly on this opportunity for effecting their purpose, and excluding him from the succession. To this attempt, as well as to all the circumstances that led to it,—a strange and eventful history,—we shall hereafter devote a special chapter. For our present purpose, of illustrating the emperor's character, it will suffice to narrate, that the officers of several regiments of the guards, which it numbered in its ranks, taking advantage of the perplexity of the men, found in them unconscious instruments of their designs, by persuading them that Nicholas was usurping, and held his brother Constantine in confinement. Headed by their officers, these regiments marched to the St. Isaac's place—a vast plain, on which is situated the Senate, the Admiralty, and the great Cathedral. Here they unhesitatingly proclaimed, as directed by their officers, “Constantine and the Constitution!”—Constantine, the emperor to whom they had sworn fidelity without having been released from their vow; and “Constitution,”—which, incredible as it may appear, *they were told and believed meant Constantine's wife!*

Other regiments of the guards had, however, taken the oath, and at the head of these the emperor made his appearance. Miloradovitch, the military governor of St. Petersburg, one of the most gallant old veterans of the Russian army, was sent up to parley with the mutineers, and persuade them to return to their duty; but having in a previous instance deceived the troops,*

* A general commanding a regiment of the foot-guards—for all the regiments of the imperial guards are commanded by major-

he found that the great influence he formerly possessed with them had departed ; they were deaf to his arguments, the thread of which was cut short by the pistol of one of the conspirators, which ended his career in the midst of his exhortations. The artillery of the guard, which was also at the disposal of the emperor, was now immediately ordered to ply the refractory regiments with grape, and some of the faithful regiments were induced to use their small arms. The fire of the guns, directed at the most deadly distance, on an almost unresisting mass, was so destructive in its effects that the insurgents were speedily mowed down or dispersed. The conspirators were apprehended, several

generals—behaved in so oppressive and tyrannical a manner towards his officers and men, that the latter were partly driven, and partly encouraged by the former to mutiny. As any similar occurrence amongst the military excites the greatest alarm with a despotic government, and it was feared that other regiments might not, if called upon, be disposed to act against them, Miloradovitch, the only man who possessed considerable popularity with the army, was dispatched to appease them. After promising them the redress of their grievances, and exemption from punishment, and appealing to them whether he had not always led them on the road to honour, he induced them to lay down their arms and follow him into the fortress, which is situated on the Neva, opposite the Winter Palace. From this moment the fate of the whole regiment remained enveloped in impenetrable mystery, as not a man of it was ever afterwards seen. In all probability they were dispersed privately, and in detail, over distant parts of the empire ; but the prevalent belief amongst the military and the public was, that they had all been walled up alive in the castle, into which they had been entrapped. The general of this regiment, in consequence of the investigation of his conduct, to which this circumstance gave rise, was disgraced.

were hanged, the rest reserved for a worse fate—perpetual banishment to Siberia.

The poor soldiers who survived the massacre, who could not be looked upon in any other light than as the victims of a fatal mistake and a misguided fidelity—who were tools, but could not by any argument be considered participators in the conspiracy—were, however, also punished with vindictive severity, and even the very regiments to which they belonged, though the next day every man was draughted out of them, are, up to the present time, still treated with marks of disfavour.

The firmness of the emperor on this eventful day, and the decision with which he acted, have been much extolled; for though the conspiracy, confined to a class, had no deep root in the nation, the danger was great at the moment, from the liability to a sudden overturn by a *coup de main*, to which a thorough despotism is peculiarly exposed, from the centralization of its principle, that gathers up all the reins of government into one knot, which one or a few ambitious hands may grasp, and from the uncertainty of what part would be taken by other regiments then marching into St. Petersburg, whose officers were suspected, and whose soldiers were equally open to delusion.

On the other hand, the emperor's behaviour on this occasion is stigmatized as pusillanimous, from the fact of his having retired out of shot as soon as his troops began to act. If, therefore, his head remained cool, and his resolution never wavered, he shewed none of that gallantry which was to be looked for in a man whose foible was martial parade, and who always appears to

pride himself more on the soldier than the sovereign. Again: in the Polish war, the emperor did not head his army, departing very widely from the principle laid down by his father Paul, when he challenged all the sovereigns of Europe, each attended by his premier, to meet himself and his prime minister, set after set, in mortal encounter, to settle a quarrel by which princes only would profit, and which ministers had fostered; on which account he drew the very sensible inference that it was unfair their subjects' blood or treasure should be expended to support it.

Another instance shews the conduct of Nicholas in a different but equally remarkable light. At the time the cholera, imported overland from India, had spread in Russia with a malignity which tempered as it travelled westward, its fearful ravages amongst the population so worked upon the popular terror and ignorance, that they imagined it to be, not a disease, but the effect of poison—some versions taxing the foreigners and the Poles, others the doctors and the authorities, with having conspired to destroy the people. To such a pitch were the passions of the populace inflamed, that they broke through all bounds, in the agony of their fear and suspicious rage, and proceeded to those outrages which, if not peculiar to slaves released from their chain, almost invariably mark their conduct. All over Russia, but particularly in St Petersburg, an indiscriminate massacre of all connected with the medical profession took place; the doctors were hurled out of windows, their heads carried on pikes, their bodies torn to shreds, and the police and authorities everywhere sought refuge in concealment. The same superstitious prejudices had invaded the

ranks of the soldiers ; the fearful ravages of the pestilence put an end to order, and all men felt like the crew of a ship about to go to pieces—released from restraint before the face of death. The mob were thus allowed to proceed from one extravagancy to another, till the emperor rode out alone into the midst of their infuriated ranks, and by the courage and presence of mind he displayed, succeeded in bridling in a few minutes the menacing and unshackled monster. Addressing the rioters in the sternest tones of his sonorous voice, he commanded them to “ kneel in the dust, and endeavour to propitiate the wrath of the Almighty, who had sent this visitation for their sins, and not increase his anger by their lawless conduct.”

The crowd, awed by his imposing and majestic manner, kneeled down as one man, followed him in the prayer which he offered up, and, quite humbled by his subsequent reprimand, returned to order and obedience.

This fact alone must establish for the emperor a character for personal fearlessness, when a proper occasion calls it forth. That the emperor is of a nervous temperament is very apparent, as he shews by his morbid anxiety when present at experiments of exploding mines or trying rockets, not only for his own safety, but for that of the men concerned, as well as by the care with which he causes his charger to be broken out of all spirit and even soundness. But nerve is a very different thing from courage ; and certainly, from one glance at the man, a physiologist would be inclined to doubt that the soul of a coward was ever cased in such a frame. Moreover, Nicholas belongs to a family whose members have shewn the

boldest blood of any of the present royal or imperial races. Paul, long before his eccentricities grew into insanity, performed feats of extraordinary boldness; the late Grand Duke Constantine habitually displayed a reckless daring; and the Grand Duke Michael, the younger brother, has shewn on every occasion a steady and unflinching bravery.

But the Emperor Nicholas has given evidence of a moral resolution on all trying occasions, which is much more valuable in a ruler than a mere recklessness of personal danger—a quality to which it is by no means necessarily allied.

The immediate family of the emperor consists of the empress, his wife, one surviving brother, the Grand Duke Michael, already mentioned, and several sons and daughters.

The empress, a Prussian princess, has never played any significant part. A sister of the present King of Prussia, she changed her religion from the Lutheran to the Greek communion, to become the wife of Nicholas, much against the inclination of her brother, who is said still to entertain a rooted personal aversion to the Russian emperor, though politically he has yielded entirely to his influence since his accession to the Prussian throne.

The eldest son of Nicholas, the Grand Duke Alexander, heir apparent to his throne, is not known in England. He has yet given no evidence of character, beyond that of a mild and tractable disposition.

Of the imperial princesses, the Grand Duchess "Marie," who, like all her family, is handsome, was wisely allowed by the emperor to follow her own choice in the selection of a partner for life, and is

married to the Duke of Leuchtenberg, a *réjéton* of the Beauharnois and Buonaparte blood.

In the marriages of his children, Nicholas is said to be perfectly indifferent to any corresponding advantages of rank, and with regard to his daughters, to have no objection to any husband for them but one of such exalted birth as would render difficult the establishment of the young couple within his own dominions, and the consequent gratification of his paternal affection by keeping his children near him. He has undoubtedly shewn his wisdom, by estimating at their proper value those great political alliances which never exercise any lasting influence on the interest of nations or their policy, but to which, from time immemorial, the ambition of crowned heads has vainly sacrificed their own domestic happiness, and the feelings of those most dear to them. But it has been elsewhere shewn that there are circumstances connected with all these alliances which would have rendered them politic as *mariages de convenance*.

The Grand Duchess of Olga, the second of the emperor's daughters, has no rival in beauty amongst the princesses of Europe; and in this instance, flattery, in asserting her to be the loveliest girl in her father's dominions, scarcely outstrips the truth.

The imperial family of Russia derive their descent from the clerical house of Romanoff; but their blood has been so repeatedly intermingled with that of Germans, that one might doubt if a single drop of Russian origin flowed in their veins, if the personal appearance of its members did not recall to mind the handsome Lieutenant Soltikoff—one of the earliest of Catherine's favourites, raised by her to the highest offices of the state.

To the circumstance of the constant alliance of the Romanoffs with the German families may be attributed the fact of all their sympathies being rather German than Russian; although the natural mistrust of despotism may partly have occasioned the marked predilection which the sovereigns of Russia have almost always displayed, to the detriment of the natural subjects, in favour of Germans,—intrusting them with three-fourths of the important offices of state which at present, as during the greater part of the time elapsed since the last century, they continue to occupy.

It is true that many of these Germans are natives of the subject Baltic provinces of Esthonia, Livonia, and Courland, or the descendants of foreigners who have come a generation back to seek their fortunes in the Russian empire. But those born without the pale of the imperial dominions are equally favoured. In general, the mongrel German race in this unhappy country, in which they have so much sway, constitute a class full of overweening and ill-founded pretension, and appear to have acquired, in addition to their native defects, all those peculiar to the Russian, without any of the countervailing good qualities which in him may partially redeem them. In general, decidedly inferior, intellectually and morally, to the pure Muscovite race, they affect to regard it with a contempt which the favouritism of their rulers has countenanced.

If we examine closely the character of the real Muscovite, debased and sunken as it is, we cannot help being struck with many of the good and noble qualities which constitute it. The vices which render

him odious and contemptible in our eyes at a first glance, may be clearly traced to the demoralizing influence of the uninterrupted servitude which, for ages past, has rendered one portion of the nation the tyrants of the other, and the absolute arbiters of the individual destiny of their fellow-men, whom they, themselves but slaves, crushed down and ruthlessly oppressed.

Let us now turn to the Russian nobles, in speaking of whom we mean the landed proprietors, who alone can be considered as entitled to the name, although the present laws of the empire confer this distinction on every individual in the service of the crown who holds a rank, civil or military, equivalent to that of commissioned officer.

This nobility of office are designated by the title of "*chenovniks*," or men of rank. The lowest of these who sits behind the desk of a public office, is equally a nobleman with the wealthy descendant of the compeers of the house of Romanoff, and is entitled to all the privileges which the proudest descent confers, including the qualification of becoming a baron or master of slaves, should promotion in office, by giving more ample scope for extortion and public robbery, ever afford him the means of purchasing them.

The type of this class may be seen in every government office—a personage, who sits in a coat with the imperial button, his green or purple velvet collar designating the department to which he is attached; but who, beneath this insignia of his rank, eschews a shirt, who wraps his feet in a tattered rag instead of stockings, using his fingers for a pocket-handkerchief, and smelling strongly of *vodka* (corn-brandy) and

onions. He must be addressed as "*vashe blagorodit*," "your nobility." He rejoices in a salary of 15*l.* per annum, and maintains the dignity of the imperial service by unblushingly pocketing a bribe of a grivnik, a coin of the value of threepence-halfpenny English, without which, if you have occasion to ask him even a question, he will not open his lips. This class of employes are to be found of every grade—from the individual just described, up to the minister of the imperial court, whose salary is 4000*l.*, and who is calculated to sell his favours at 100,000*l.* per annum more; they differ indeed in fortune and in external refinement, but in point of corruption, venality, and servility, may be unhesitatingly ranked together.

The landed proprietors, with the exception of an inconsiderable portion who have obtained possession of slaves and land in the manner above alluded to, are the immediate descendants of those turbulent Boyars, of whom we read so much in the early history of Russia; a feudal and wealthy aristocracy, plunged in all the excesses of ignorance and barbarity, and formidable only to their tsars, until the time when Peter the Great not only reduced them to obedience, but commenced depriving them of every valuable privilege—a work which his successors have followed up so perseveringly and unremittingly, as to have reduced them to the most degraded condition of any landed aristocracy or people in Europe.

In pursuance of this system of policy, nothing was left them but their wealth, of which probably they were not stripped, from the conviction that their general tendency to luxury and extravagance—another oriental feature in their character, and which all the

additional temptations to profusion offered by civilization could only increase—would rapidly tend to the ruin and dissipation of their fortunes ; a prevision which is daily being realized, and for the facilitation of which government has carefully provided. The crown is always ready to advance money on slaves and estates, which is seldom repaid, and eventually enables it to gather them into its own domains.

Originally encouraged by every possible means to visit foreign countries, and to intermingle with the subjects of more civilized nations, and naturally gifted with considerable aptitude for imitation, this class took readily, and at once, the superficial impress of that civilization with which it came in contact, and exhibits, without its valuable substratum, all the polish which should be the finishing varnish of the picture. not, as it is, a gloss to cover its defects. It has adopted the tone, the manners, the elegance, and external refinement of the best society of other countries, with which those who travel have principally mingled, and which they have widely disseminated amongst the ranks of the untravelled class at home ; but has acquired little of its solid instruction, and still less of those feelings inherited by other nations, from the chivalrous institutions which for so many centuries tempered their feudal darkness, tinging the public mind unconsciously with an admiration for what was noble, an abhorrence of what was base.

It is to this cause that the feeling may be traced, animating even the lowest and most brutalized members of a British mob, when they will not tolerate any unfair superiority in a street contest, or a blow inflicted on a fallen man. It is to this cause that we

may trace the feelings which, in Britain and other European countries, make those in the most abject condition blush at being detected in a lie, and which, if chivalry owe its partial development to Christianity, must be admitted to have acted more directly on the civilization of the modern world than Christianity has done in any other way.

This is a groundwork of character unknown in Russia, where feudality existed, but chivalry never. That keen and vivid sense of honour, to which in France and England all classes are so generally sensitive, though each in their peculiar station, in a different degree, and which we are apt, before we compare them with those of countries where the causes from which they are derived never existed, to attribute to their intuitive perceptions of right and wrong, is in Russia everywhere wanting, both amongst high and low.

In the education of the Russian nobleman, everything is calculated for show, and he is accomplished, without any really solid acquirements. Generally, he speaks several languages with the accent and fluency of a native; he is a proficient in music and dancing, and converses with ease and brilliancy on the topics of the day; but, very often, the same individual is deficient in classical, in historical, and geographical knowledge, and has not the least idea of writing the language he speaks so well, any more than his own; a tongue rich and musical, but which the higher classes regard much as the gentry in Ireland do the Gaelic.

Congregating in the chief town of the government in which their property is situated, or in Moscow, still the capital of the nobility, they only visit their

estates during a part of the year, from motives of retrenchment. Seldom addicted to field sports, they take little exercise; and cards and other frivolous and sedentary pursuits, which have not the advantage of conducing to invigorate the body, as well as amuse the mind, are their favourite occupations.

The government service, in which the nobility are forced to enter by the most arbitrary regulations, occupies several very irksome years. Admission to its civil and military posts, instead of being courted, as in other countries, is looked upon by them as an odious task, which either the law obliges them to perform, or which they are expected to undertake by an authority they dare not resist. Though a nobleman enjoys the title of prince or count, his rank only places him at the bottom of the scale of fourteen classes, beginning with field-m Marshals and descending to ensigns, into which the government divides all its civil and military officers. The officers of thirteen of these classes, unless he attain rank by service, are thus all his superiors, and he is subject to every kind of insult or contumely from them.

But if, contented with the peaceable enjoyment of its wealth, a noble Russian family, disregarding the humiliation to which its members are exposed from the inferior station in which the law classes them, wishes to live in peace, it must not be imagined that even the letter of that law will long allow them to enjoy such quiet and retirement. If for two generations they neglect to serve until attaining the rank of commissioned officers, the third generation sink to the class of peasants, and not only forfeit the estates (which the rank to which they are degraded no longer

entitles them to hold), but become even subject to summary and degrading corporal punishment, at the hands of the lowest police official. The duty they are thus compelled to perform is, in the commencement, most disagreeable and severe. A nobleman must enter the service, whatever his influence or interest, unless he come out of a military school, or cadet corps, as it is denominated, as a *younker*, or volunteer—that is, a private soldier, subject to all the discipline and duties of that unenviable condition, but with the prospect of receiving a commission, not possibly before three or four years, perhaps only after a much longer period.

When the Russian noble attains this rank, if he serve in the guards, which is most usual, for the merest trifle (if seen in private clothes, for example, if caught in the perpetration of walking without a sword, or the enormity of wearing kid gloves) he is exposed to being degraded to the rank of private, and sent off a thousand or two of miles into the interior, or to the Caucasus, where the influence of his family, of his wealth, and his ingenuity, are generally exerted for several years, to enable him to work his way again to the position of a commissioned officer, which can alone exempt him from the servitude of carrying a musket for twenty years longer, to which he is doomed.

It is therefore not surprising that on attaining the first rank or two, a Russian nobleman quits the service for ever, and flies the weight of his epaulettes with the alacrity of a boy escaping from school. But it is not always that he dare leave; it is often intimated to him that he must remain; and who can venture in Russia to disobey such *intimations*?

There is indeed a portion of the aristocracy, whose dilapidated fortunes have induced them to seek, in the cultivation of court favour, and in the service of the crown, the opportunities of in some measure regaining their wealth; and such, with very few exceptions, compose the nobility who inhabit St. Petersburg.

Nearly all those who are wealthy and independent, shun the vicinity of majesty—the refulgence of whose rays is always apt to be scorching,—and consequently prefer the old metropolis of Moscow, where they are more likely to be allowed to enjoy the quiet in which they would generally be well contented to live. They are there at least less exposed to the constant and arbitrary interference with their conduct and concerns, and from the necessity of daily regulating their intimacies by the thermometer of the imperial court. The painful restraint which this influence imposes on the highest rank, and on the gay and fashionable world of St. Petersburg, may be judged from the fact, that during a ridiculous political “bouderie,” which was enacted between the king of the French and the Emperor Nicholas, who, through their diplomatic agents, retaliated on each other various incivilities, or rather the omission of civilities which the etiquette of royal and imperial intercourse requires,—M. Perier, French representative, having, according to his instruction, failed to address the customary felicitations to the emperor on new year’s day, found, to his surprise, that in every drawing-room of St. Petersburg no one dared venture to address, much less to dance with either himself or his lady.

Such is the condition to which those once haughty Boyars are reduced, who raised regiments of their

own, and shook the throne at every breath of their displeasure.

Encouraged so long to travel, that the desire of visiting foreign countries has become, with all the higher orders, a predominant passion, the present emperor places many obstacles in the way of all who wish to go abroad, and obliges them to return at the expiration of three years, under pain of forfeiting their property and rank. To many, the permission to leave the country is altogether refused, and in every case it is only renewed with the utmost difficulty.

It is said, in defence of these summary measures against absenteeism, that without them most of the wealthy Russians would quit their own country, and scatter their wealth over Europe; and this is a highly probable supposition, which, when their unenviable condition at home is considered, can scarcely be matter of surprise.

In costume and mode of life the Russian nobles imitate the French. On entering the house of a Russian nobleman the visiter might imagine himself in a spacious Parisian hotel, if he do not happen to see the nurses, in the gaudy and picturesque national costume, or the dwarf in the ante-room, or cast his eye round on many English comforts which have not generally found their way to Paris.

In disposition the Russian nobleman is hospitable, generous, and profuse, and capable of entertaining enlarged and liberal views, for which the ideas of some at least of his neighbours, profound as they call themselves, and may be, are much too narrow and contracted. In his present condition, it is lamentable to see him, at the most valuable period of his life, in

the dawn of maturity, the slave to a uniform, spending his days and nights in drinking champagne and playing cards,—at which latter, if he happen to take dishonourable advantage, the only disgrace is in detection, which can in a few months be got over.

When he quits his uniform it is no less painful to contemplate him, his wealth and idleness affording him full time to meditate on the insignificant part he is playing in his native country, and seeking excitement in a course of extravagance and dissipation speedily leading to his ruin.

It is almost impossible, even with these causes, to explain how rapidly in Russia you see colossal fortunes disappear; and for ruining themselves quickly, the aristocracy of this country bear away the palm, by far, from even the inhabitants of Great Britain. Fortunes of ten, twenty, thirty thousand pounds per annum, in a few years utterly disappear; they are not tied up for a limited number of years, but utterly dissipated, principal and interest, and without as much show as the mere entanglement of the annual revenue would have occasioned in England.

Notwithstanding an appearance of the highest external polish, nothing can be more barbaric than the Russian noble. In his profusion, it is evident that he esteems all things by the money they cost, and not for their intrinsic beauty or excellence. The value that we see sometimes set, by caprice or vulgarity, on mere rarity, unconnected with any other merit, in England and in Holland, may be palliated by the spirit of commerce. A man may be excused for esteeming a hideous Chinese idol or a singular looking tulip, higher than the copy of a Canova or a beautiful moss rose,

if he only holds these articles as representatives of the value others are foolish enough to set upon them ; but if he purchase them for the purpose of keeping them, valuing them only from their unquity, we can almost trace the error of the head to an error of the heart. A sense of the beautiful will suffice to give us pleasure in the possession of a beautiful object ; but nothing but the base wish of exciting envy in others will, in a metaphysical analysis, account, *en dernier ressort*, for the satisfaction experienced in the ownership of anything which has only great rarity to recommend it.

This feeling strongly predominates in the Russian noble, and he is ready to purchase all that is rare and therefore dear. At St. Petersburg and at Moscow he will give from one guinea to five guineas a pound for the celebrated sterlet—a very ordinary fish in itself, neither unlike in taste nor superior to the brill ; he will thus often give fifty guineas for a fish, and have two of them at his table, boiled down to soup in oceans of champagne. On the spot where the sterlet is caught, where it is in perfection, and may be purchased for a few shillings, he rarely touches it. He purchases Tokay at ten guineas per bottle, a wine, of which the value, always imaginary, is, in the more expensive sorts, as much a matter of caprice as that of the costly Dutch bulbs. I must explain, that the price is eleven ducats per bottle, or flask ; but the flask is so small as to bring it at least to the price above mentioned.

When travelling abroad, he purchases pictures and engravings at immense prices, and hangs a masterpiece of art unconsciously next a performance not fit for an alehouse sign. We have known a Russian gentleman, having little more than that sum of ready

money, give upwards of two thousand guineas for a Cashmere shawl. There was nothing beautiful about the arrangement of the colours, but the wool, or rather goats' hair, was so marvellously fine, that, although of ample dimensions, and very warm, it could be drawn through a small ring, and its vast volume almost compressed into the hand like a cobweb. The purchaser had neither wife nor family; nor would he, as he expressed, "have wasted a silk handkerchief on any woman in the world;" nor had he any idea of parting with it at a profit. A few weeks after, wanting money, he sold it for 1500*£*, thus paying 500*£*. to be, for a short time, the possessor of a rarity.

Amongst the oriental tastes and habits which still predominate in the Muscovite nation, that of possessing expensive jewels, furs, and shawls, is still prevalent, without the reasons which excuse it in Asiatics, and formerly excused it in the Russian. Before the introduction of banks and bank notes, there were an obvious advantage and convenience in concentrating into as small a compass and weight as possible all the superfluity of wealth, both for purposes of security and easy conveyance. Jewels and shawls, in particular, are the letters of credit and bank notes of the Orientals. A highly valuable shawl may be twisted into a rope for a belt or a turban, and sustain the dagger or pistols, or protect the head. It may be worn for thousands of miles, without being either torn or damaged in colour, or creased. Two or three years since a shawl was brought to St. Petersburg which was valued at 6000*£*. by judges, but which the emperor refused to purchase at that price for the empress. Although the shawl might have

otherwise found many buyers — for after all the pawning of six hundred serfs to the crown would always produce the required sum—yet who dared to purchase what had been vainly asked by the empress? It is still not uncommon for noblemen to have a large share of their fortunes locked up in property of this description; and it is very common for a woman's dowry to consist wholly of such articles. These are being constantly pledged at the government Lombard—a place of resort at which it is common to hear people of fashion give each other rendezvous. It is singular that this habit of tying up capital in costly and unproductive articles should be as prevalent with the merchant, who ought at least to see his error, as with the noble.

The Marquis de Custine, whose keen eye during his short sojourn enabled him, in a country where everything is veiled, to unmask almost instinctively so many deceits, at once saw through the dazzling varnish which hides the still barbarous habits of the Russian noble. He justly observes, that to see the Russian noble in his palace, courtly in his manners, speaking the language of England, France, and Italy, surrounded by works of art, the elegances of Paris, the comforts of England,—we may pardon the error into which so many travellers have fallen, in imagining that the other requisites of civilization must necessarily accompany many of its superfluities; it required some penetration to discern that the English bed was kept for the eye of the stranger, but never slept in; that beneath the rich Louis Quatorze dressing-gown, or the sable shube, worth ten thousand roubles, thrown hurriedly on, was a coarse coloured shirt, which had been a fort-

night on its owner's back, and beneath the coarse coloured shirt !

When we thus see the costly fur, the richly embroidered satin mirrors, and Turkey carpets, and beds of eider-down, concealing the filthy habits of the Calmuc, we may the more readily understand how polish of manner, elegance, and urbanity, may cover a want of all those feelings which constitute the dignity and pride of humanity, and which amongst western nations in some measure exist, or are not wholly rooted out, where accompanied by vulgarity and even depravity.

The Russian empire presents striking examples of the rapidity with which some of the tastes of civilization may be aped by thorough barbarians. Some of the chiefs of the Kirguise Tartars, pensioned, and induced by the policy of government to reside a portion of the year in dwellings built for them, retain their sheep-skins, their vermin, and their nomadic habits, but drink champagne, Sauterne, and Dublin stout, to wash down their pillau or their horse-flesh, and look at their guest, to see if his glass wants replenishing, through a fashionable gold eyeglass.

In personal appearance, the noble classes in Russia are darker generally than the peasantry, though even amongst these the fair complexion, on the whole, predominates. They differ from them also in wanting what so adds to the comeliness of both sexes, and embellishes the countenance of the *moujik*—good hair and good teeth. In general, what beauty they possess appears, by a mistake of nature, to be confined to the men; and this is the case both among the higher and lower orders, but more especially amongst the

peasant women ; it is of the rarest occurrence to meet with one even comely, fresh-looking, and not actually hideous or mis-shapen. It is a very common sight to see a matron throwing her breasts over her shoulders, to suckle the child she carries on her back.

CHAPTER III.

THE SERF.

THE Emperor Napoleon, if diffuse and wordy in his written style, has at least left to posterity some of those pithy sayings, into which a whole volume of ideas is condensed—a whole picture crowded. “Grattez le Russe,” he said, “et vous trouverez le Tartare;” “Scratch, and the Tartar will peep through the Russian.” We have seen somewhat in our last chapter, of the truth of this epigram. He calls the Emperor Alexander a Greek of the lower empire; and he further says, “Woe unto Europe, if ever a tsar should arise who wears a beard!” After one has closely examined the men and things within the Russian empire, one is struck with the profound appreciation of character, and the portentous import, contained in these picture-sentences, which one had ranked at first amongst sayings more terse than true.

These words of warning to Europe, whenever a tsar shall wear a beard, strike us in all their force, when we turn from the contemplation of the great body of the Muscovite people, the private serfs, the

crown serfs, and the freedmen—the true bearded, castaned, superstitious Russians of the days of Ivan the Terrible—all comprised in the general name of moujik. There are, at a rough statement, upwards of twenty millions of private serfs, and nearly the same number belonging to the imperial domain; and they are already so blindly obedient to the tsar, so confident of his power, that it is no exaggeration to say that many believe he can stay the pestilence or the tempest, or allay the drought, at his pleasure. This is the case with a sovereign who runs counter to their dearest prejudice, who shaves their cherished beards, who sends them chained together to his armies, and whose garb and habits are those of the stranger. What would it be with a tsar who seemed a thorough Muscovite, like themselves, in his dress, his habits, and feelings? Why he might use their fanaticism as a mighty lever to uproot the very nation, and cast it in any direction around him, like a tremendous human avalanche.

The reader may perhaps remember, in antithesis to this hint given to the tsars to wear a beard, by the great conqueror, the advice which a genius, no less remarkable in the world of letters, gives to the Emperor Alexander:—

“Teach him to wash and shave his Baskir hordes,
And into ploughshares turn their barren swords.”

Perhaps in these contradictory counsels are comprised the only courses which would have led to that elevation of which the tsars of Russia have so long been dreaming, the one to the devastating glory of a Timour, the other to the peace, prosperity, and happiness of that large portion of mankind of which

fate has made them guardians. The Emperor Nicholas has not had the genius to perceive that the middle path he follows will never lead him into either of those diverging roads to greatness.

Let us now proceed to examine the class of bearded moujiks, the most important element, if the most inert, of the Colossus of Russian strength. Physically the moujik has retained more of the pure Slavonic than in his manners, customs, and feelings; but even physically he bears no small traces of his admixture with the Turk and Tartar, beneath whose rule he groaned so long; the cat-like eye standing downwards from the temples; the nose, of which the nostrils are almost always too visible; and sometimes not only the dark hair and complexion, but the high cheek-bones, and the regular Mongolian physiognomy. It would appear, however, as if, on the whole, the Tartar and Mongolian type became rapidly effaced in the vigorous fecundity of the Slavonic; and hence, whilst the European aspect in a few years predominates, where two-thirds of the blood was originally Tartar, the character retains all its true proportion of Asiatic spirit, though the Asiatic features may only be occasionally traced in the faces of individuals. It is this admixture during centuries of servitude, which has made the difference between the Muscovite and Polish character, for the language of these two people still bears as close a resemblance as the dialects of many of our English counties to each other.

As regards personal appearance, the hideousness of the women, and the comparative comeliness of the men, have caused the latter to be considered as handsome by many travellers. Their dense hair, thick

beard and mustachios, white teeth, and the loose drapery of their semi-Asiatic dress, are all apt somewhat to mislead us ; but when we see these men as soldiers, cropped, shaven, and dressed in clothes which shew the figure, the illusion utterly vanishes ; we find the face, that appeared handsome when hidden by tufts of hair, mean and inexpressive ; the Herculean frames, when stripped of the sheepskin, sink into disproportioned insignificance, and are always distorted by the great protuberance of the stomach, occasioned by the want of nutritious quality in their food, and the consequent quantity required.

The Marquis de Custine is enthusiastic in his praise of the male beauty of the Muscovites ; but it is evident that he has been misled, partly by the circumstances above-mentioned, partly from having judged of the race by the servants and coachmen of noblemen, to whose appearance he often alludes ; but these are no fair specimen, being chosen for their beauty out of thousands of serfs ;—and lastly, from confounding with the pure Muscovites the Little-Russians—the people of the Ukraine, which is already Cossac. Now the Cossacs, as will be hereafter shewn, are no more Muscovites than Muscovites are Poles, or Dutchmen Englishmen. The wish of the Russian government being to obliterate the memory of their Polish brotherhood, this wish has inspired the Russian writers and historians, particularly the courtly Karamsin. The confusion occasioned by the fact that “Cossacs,” in several adjoining countries, was the general term for all freebooters, has led to the belief of their Muscovite origin, because the early history of Russia constantly alludes to Cossacs long before the present remarkable races had been called into existence.

The most conclusive evidence on the subject of the personal appearance of the Russians, is to be derived, in St. Petersburg, from the examination of the imperial guard—a selection from sixty millions. There are many thousands of men all up to the six-foot standard, and yet it would actually be difficult, when stripped of their padding, to find twenty men in a whole division equal to the first promiscuous twenty in Queen Victoria's first or second life-guards, or blues.

The moujik inhabits a log-house, which he builds with his own axe, with which he is marvellously dexterous; the interstices he stuffs with moss, and cuts down and planes, to a surprising smoothness, with the same instrument. The axe is his constant companion: it is a tool a little crooked in the handle, and he laughs at our English hatchet, as being almost useless for want of this peculiarity. The severity of the climate he inhabits obliges him to make ~~one~~ ^{an} for himself, and he does make ~~one~~ within his dwelling, the whole long winter through, hotter than that of the tropics. Necessity, that mother of invention, has taught him what all the science of civilization has left unlearned in this respect in France, in England, and even in Germany.

In England, if not precisely correct, I am within the mark, in stating that thirteen-fourteenths of our fuel are wasted, or, in other words, that where we burn fourteen tons of coal, the heat of thirteen of them is wasted up the chimney. In France and Germany, the iron stoves, besides never disseminating an equal heat, part with some of their metal to the atmosphere, and burning all the particles of dust and vapour that settle on their surface, give rise to noisome and unwholesome gases.

The Russian stove is a vast stack of bricks, with a small oven, and intersected with flues; the oven is filled with wood or faggots, and directly the carbonic acid has escaped from the fuel, the chimney and the iron door of the oven are closed, and the place is heated for the next four and twenty hours. The bricks, a material very slow in conducting heat, take several hours to heat through, after which they keep parting gradually and equably with the caloric they have absorbed, for the next six and thirty hours.

The moujik all the winter wears his sheepskin; sometimes the whole year through, though it is often in summer superseded by a caftan of the coarse brown or grey homespun wool; he wears a coloured woollen sash to fasten it round the waist, in which his faithful axe reposes. His bushy hair is shaven from the nape of the neck, and the hair is cut all round the head, by clipping away all that appears under a wooden bason, put upon it by the operator; it is cut somewhat in the fashion of a thorough-bred's "bang" tail, and with the same original object, that of making it look thicker. A leather strap, passing over his forehead, binds down these dense locks, and reminds us of the old Greek fashion; but it requires a powerful imagination to see, like Custine, any trace of the Greek profile or expression beneath this classic head-gear.

The moujik provides against the rigour of the climate; he does not, and he cannot, brave it with the same impunity as even the Spaniard or Italian. At a battue party, where a hundred and fifty peasants were beating the wood, in an intense cold, with a strong wind, there were only six who were not somewhere frost-bitten. The six foreign sportsmen for

whom they were beating up the game, though externally less well provided, were untouched by the cold. The moujik leaves his dwelling, his blood raised by the heat of his artificial atmosphere to a high temperature, and the thick sheepskin, an excellent non-conductor, retains the heat for several hours; when it is escaping, the first roof beneath which he takes refuge, restores him to the same tropical warmth.

The moujik, like all classes of the Russians, is inordinately fond of a vapour bath, and learns to endure a temperature of steam approaching to 200° Fahrenheit. When his body is thoroughly heated, it is generally known that he rolls in the snow, or plunges in ice-cold water. At night, the dvorniks, or porters, in St. Petersburg and Moscow, in a cold of twenty-five degrees Reamur, the intensity of which freezes alcohol, and converts into hail-stones boiling water thrown into the air, come out barefooted and covered only by a cotton shirt and linen trowsers, to let in the carriages of their masters. The moujiks are often seen snoring, dead drunk, in the snow, in the severest weather.

From facts like these, which arrest the observation of every traveller, it is not surprising that an idea should have been imbibed, that extraordinary power of enduring cold characterised the Russian people; but on closer examination, we find precisely the reverse to be the case. The most delicate English or southern child, when heated in the vapour of the Russian bath, *cannot feel* the coldness of snow or ice. The pails of iced water thrown on the bather, feel merely tepid. The simple immersion in the coldest water does not even produce a shudder, whilst the body has so great

an excedent of caloric to part with; to remain in it when the human temperature is reduced beyond a certain point, which the Russians never do, might prove dangerous, or even fatal. The moujik, who rushes half boiled from his bath into the snow, feels his teeth chatter on plunging unprepared into water of the spring temperature of our English rivers.

It is the same principle, of the cold not acting on the human body till it has got rid of the superabundant heat artificially imbibed, which accounts for the impunity of the dvorniks. These men, (who, by the way are not exposed, as mentioned, above a few minutes,) sleep in rooms in which the temperature of the atmosphere is not less than ninety Fahrenheit, and in addition to this lay upon sheepskins stretched upon the stack of hot bricks which forms the Russian stove. They, or anybody else might, when thus heated, stand for many minutes naked in the open air, before feeling the cold; though if chilled at the outset, instead of being as they are, at fever heat, in the same space of time their extremities would be frozen hard. The drunken moujiks who are seen sleeping in the snow, having always rapidly drunk a large quantity of ardent spirits, the body is in a high state of temporary fever. Their sheepskins prevent the rapid escape of the heat thus generated; but when this ceases, the man wakes and seeks the instantaneous shelter of a human habitation. In an intense cold, a few minutes only elapse between feeling chilly, and the stagnation of the blood; no two evils can well be more different than to be frozen or to be perished. When the moujik is not within reach of a human habitation, or where he has not sufficiently recovered his instinct before parting with the

animal heat, he freezes to death. Thousands of peasants die in this way every winter, in the Russian dominions.

Of all people in the world, perhaps the Russians are those who in their lives have felt the least cold ; but they understand an art of which we are wholly ignorant in our temperate climes—that of perfectly guarding against its rigours, better even than all other northern people. Perhaps they are naturally less fitted to stand its severity than any of the white race. Physically, the Russian moujik is far from being, in any other sense, strong or enduring ; the very nature of his food precludes the possibility of this. He grows wheat and rears cattle, of which the rapacity of his master, during four centuries, has almost allowed him to forget the taste ; he lives almost entirely on rye, fermented cabbage, and a little rank black hemp-seed oil. It is true, there are many other people in Europe whose staple article of food is rye ; it is true, that the potato contains chemically still less of what are supposed to be the nutritive portions of food than even rye, and it is true that there are races almost fed on the potato. But experience shews that root to be so happily adapted, as an article of food, to the human constitution, that man evidently thrives better reduced to the potato, than to the rye.

But the singularly perverted taste of the Muscovite people induces them to reduce, before they consume it, a large part of the nutriment which even rye grain contains. They ferment their bread to the third or acetous degree ; the black bread of Russia, unlike that of all other countries, is bitter and sour, and as nauseous in the mouth as alum. The starch and sugar of the grain

is so lost by this process, that it contains far less nourishment than even the rye-bread of the extreme north, when scarcity obliges the inhabitants to mix with the grain one-half of the sweet tender bark of the pine tree.

Probably the peculiar acidity of this bread and of the fermented cabbage, obliges the moujik to eat large quantities of salt. The biscuit of Russian men-of-war's men is a rusk made of this bread; they may be seen soaking it in the sea-water. The weak quality of their food requires them to consume it in immense quantities; its acidity seems to require much salt, and the joint salt and acid taken into the stomach evidently render necessary a proportionate amount of liquid to wash it down. This liquid is taken in the shape of quass, or water discoloured, and rendered slightly acid, by this bread, or by fermented rye, or else of hot water *called* tea.

'Tea,* it may be here observed, is the principal luxury besides brandy, in which the moujik indulges, when in his power. It is common to see him on these occasions call for a samovar, or tea-urn full of water; this he continues pouring through a small tea-pot containing a pinch of tea, until the water is all consumed. He will actually thus imbibe eight, twelve, or fifteen pints of hot tea at a sitting. Like the Russians of all classes, he drinks it from a tumbler, and he will, when able to afford it, take with it two or three small lumps of sugar. When in company, for he is con-

* The annual importation of tea into the Russian empire averages ten million lbs. ; about one-fourth of the quantity now imported into Great Britain.

vivial even over this thin beverage, a piece of sugar is passed round, and each guest bites from it a piece, which he keeps within his teeth whilst a glass or two is swallowed. Perhaps this habit was overlooked by a traveller from whom we have largely quoted, when he talks of "*this elegant beverage.*"

It has been deemed advisable, further on, to divide the Russian empire into two great general divisions—the region of the north, or that of forest swamp and cultivation, and the southern region, covered with vast steppes, or prairies, principally inhabited by nomades, and still devoted to pastoral purposes.

The former of these great divisions is peopled by the great bulk of the purely Muscovite race; and to those inhabiting it, as regards their mode of life, the description given above must be understood to apply. In the region of the steppes, where animal life is less valuable than the produce of agriculture, the case is naturally reversed, and not only the carnivorous races of Tartars and Cossacs live principally upon flesh, but even the Muscovite portion of the scanty population of these southern regions, as well as of that where the forest and prairie governments blend into each other.

The moujik is deeply tinctured with veneration and superstition; he is patient, cunning, eager of gain, dishonest in obtaining it, and yet generous. He firmly believes that St. Alexander Nevsky* (a very

* This story is more popularly related of St. Anthony, who is traditionally said to have embarked on it in the Tiber, and drifted through the Atlantic, the Baltic, the Neva, and the Ladaga Lake, and then commenced a course of internal navigation, for the purpose of converting the Muscovites to Christianity.

prudent and truly Russian saint,) floated down the river Neva upon a mill-stone; he never enters an apartment without crossing himself before the gaudily-framed picture of the titular saint; he is wonderfully scrupulous that the oil burned in the small antique lamp suspended before it on all holidays, should be the pure oil of the olive, as the dignity of his celestial patron requires; and when he has risen to the rank which the ambition of every peasant covets—that of meschinine, or licensed to trade—he swears lustily by him, to attest the honour of a fraudulent bargain, and inwardly endeavours to make Heaven a participator of his deceit, by promising the saint a per centage on the gain, to be applied to the adornment of his shrine. And where is the marvel? He knows that he can bribe the powerful baron, his master; that his master again bribes some one, before whom *he* trembles; that his master's master bribes a still more potent superior; and analogic reasoning will not permit him to doubt, that as the minister is bribed, so the minister bribes the emperor, and so the saint may in the end bribe God Almighty.

Perhaps the state of social relations in the Russian empire may chiefly influence his character, as far as honesty is concerned. There are few robbers in Russia, but how many Russians are there who are not thieves? The waking-dream of every Muscovite peasant in the empire is, to become a trader. When he can thus far satisfy his ambition, his avidity of gain is such, that no solid ulterior advantage to be derived from the best customer can induce him to forego the present opportunity of cheating him, if only of a few pence; nothing can prevent him from asking double

the price for his merchandize that he will be eventually contented to take. But, on the other hand, if he rises into a second or first guild merchant, (and although this is, of course, as great a lottery-prize in the existence of the petty trader, as to become a petty trader may be to the indiscriminate population of a Russian village)—he may be pretty safely entrusted with large sums of money, as is required in the internal trade of this vast country, and will join in commercial associations, in which the mass answers for the individual. But is not the key to this anomaly to be found in the fact, that *the value of credit* is the great conservator of the probity of all other commercial communities?

One striking feature in the character of the moujik, is the rooted distaste he shews for all agricultural employment, and his natural love and aptitude for trade. In this he can only be compared to the Armenian, or rather the Israelite, at least the modern Israelite—for the biblical Hebrews, surrounded by commercial nations, shewed in those days as little aptitude for commercial pursuits, as they have since been distinguished in them. But, as with the Jews, at least until recently, the Muscovites' love for trade does not extend beyond a matter of barter or agency; it does not lead him with equal readiness to manufacture, nor does he shew any abstract preference in favour of any of the mechanical arts over agricultural labour, directly the former require any personal manual exertion.

Superficial observers have supposed the Russian to have a natural incapacity for figures, from seeing him use in every shop and market-place, and even government office, the little frame of calculating beads, similar to those of the Chinese. But this is a glaring error;

the Russian is an excellent calculator, and he at all times prefers this congenial labour of the brain, to the labour of the hands.

This tendency, whether inherent, or from whatever causes it may have arisen, is deeply to be lamented in a country of which the principal riches are agricultural; but it is so general, that perhaps now nothing but the restraints of servitude or misery prevent the great mass of the peasantry from trying their fortune in trade.

The author has heard an intelligent Russian endeavour to palliate the arbitrary authority of his government, by saying, "You are as well aware as I am, that if to-morrow our nobles were as free as English gentlemen, our peasantry as free as English peasants, nine out of ten of every noble family who could scrape together the means, would fly into that civilized Europe we long for through our prison bars; nine out of ten of the moujiks, relieved from their servitude, would abandon the soil to which they are tied, to start with a pedlar's pack."

Of course, that very freedom would render the Russian empire a residence less to be dreaded by the noble, and the want of bread must soon drive the moujik again to the plough tail. But this tendency of both the higher and lower classes, is not the less true, or the less unlike any other picture of society which the whole world affords us. Let us not talk after this of the artificial condition of civilized communities.

The following anecdote affords a remarkable illustration of what has been advanced on this subject. When the Emperor Alexander visited England, the highly cultivated farm and park-like appearance of the

country struck him so forcibly, that he engaged some Englishmen to introduce a similar system in his own dominions. Amongst others were two Quakers, brothers. Land was allotted to them on the banks of the Neva, above St. Petersburg, and also on the road to Tzarskòezelo. Several wretched cottages gave shelter on this ground to a few imperial serfs. The labour of these men was placed at the disposal of the adventurers; the emperor advanced them 4000*l.* capital; they were to hold it for a term of years rent free, and at the expiration of that term the rent to be paid was to be agreed on to their mutual satisfaction. The soil was rich; the vicinity of St. Petersburg afforded any quantity or quality of manure, and in a few years the whole tract assumed the appearance of an English district. The brothers paid back the borrowed capital, realized a handsome fortune, and offered, at the expiration of their lease, about 2000*l.* per annum as rent for a part of it,—which was conceded to them. The rest of the now fertile land was divided amongst the imperial serfs, who had originally vegetated upon it, and had since been forced to bring it into proper cultivation. It was given to them rent free, with all the stock upon it, as an encouragement; and around them was an unlimited quantity of equally good land, which would have been conceded to them, and which it was hoped their interests would prompt them to reclaim.

The results of the first and second years' crop placed each of these men, who had never previously owned as many shillings, in possession of a few hundred pounds; and there was nothing to prevent its becoming an income to them. Instead of this, they

one and all abandoned their farms, to speculate. One or two have thriven; the rest have sunk back to poverty, and the land is again drowned with water, and overgrown with bushes!

In the same manner as with the Jews, is it not probable that this tendency of character has been produced by the long oppression under which the serf has groaned, by rendering it an axiom of traditional wisdom with the moujik, not only to turn all his thoughts to the acquirement of wealth as the only method of alleviating his hard lot, but also to seek to obtain it only by those means which will enable him to conceal it both from the rapacity of his lord and of the agents of the emperor? We shall see, on examining his condition, that his caution is generally so well founded in this respect that he may well be excused for his mistrust in those few instances in which it might be safe to make an exception.

The singular apathy with which the moujik sees brutal treatment, without allowing his features or his manner to express the slightest disapprobation of their sufferings, or sympathy in them, is strangely anomalous with his usual kindliness of manner towards his own class.

The drunkenness of Russian moujiks is nearly always a loving drunkenness; they bow to each other ceremoniously in the street, and use in their language terms of endearment. Is it that, spurned and trampled on, unable to turn their eyes on any human beings more abject, they find, unconsciously, some solace in treating each other with that respect, of which the share, due even to the most fallen humanity, is utterly denied them by the classes above them?

There exists a natural kindliness of feeling in the breasts of the Russian peasantry; the beggar, or the Siberian convict marched along the road, never vainly implores a piece of his black bread, if it be the last in his humble dwelling. There are also traits which argue a latent generosity of disposition; amongst which we may instance the effort every moujik will make on certain occasions to treat his companions. When he has obtained leave from his lord to hire himself out for wages in the great cities, as the bearded sledge or drosky driver, he lives on about six shillings per month, and yet may be seen, when he has occasionally met with a relative, an old acquaintance, or a neighbour from his village (which is perhaps two thousand miles off), treating him, in a *tractirs* or *vinotorgovlia*, to champagne at twelve shillings per bottle!

Perhaps it may be said that this—a spark of the same Muscovite spirit which occasions the extravagance of his lord—arises from an ostentatious feeling; but let us beware, in estimating the characters both of races and individuals, of seeking to analyze too far anything that bears the semblance of a virtue, in ignorance of where it may lead us—although assuredly far enough to shock some of our prejudices and some of our most deeply rooted ideas. Let us content ourselves with the stream where it flows clearly before us, without tracing it back to a muddy and discoloured source.

We will now examine the condition of the moujiks, who constitute a class not much less than one-twentieth of the whole world's population, or double that of the United Kingdom. In round numbers, they may be computed at from forty-three to forty-five millions. Of these, rather more than half are still serfs of private

individuals ; the rest are serfs of the crown. The condition of the serf is no better—barring dead-letter laws, which speak about protecting him, and the absence of prejudice of colour, a real advantage—than that of the negro slaves of the Havannah or Carolina.

We will see what real progress has been made towards ameliorating it. Practically, the slave is, in Russia, as completely at his masters mercy as any slave has ever been at any period. He can sell him, he can strip him of his property, he can separate families for ever, he can torture him to death. It is true that he must evade the law to do all these things ; but this evasion entails not even a risk, but merely an additional formality.

It is true, an ukase forbids, under severe penalties, the sale of any slave without the land to which, from protective motives, it attaches him ; but the owner may let out slaves, on a ninety years' lease, to work in the mines of Siberia. He may have two estates a thousand miles distant ; he may order the mother to leave the child at her breast on one, and proceed to settle on the other. The law does not give him the direct right of seizing his slave's property, but he has a thousand ways of extorting it, which he may employ, without the necessity of even evading the law, since the law gives him absolute disposal over his serfs' time and labour. The author has seen a nobleman amuse himself by making his slaves stand for hours on one leg.

It is generally known that some of the wealthiest men—the larger number of the first guild merchants, whose word is good for a hundred thousand pounds on the Exchange at St. Petersburg, and who are pos-

essed of that sum, or still more considerable property—are mostly slaves. Now, the proprietor of these men can to-morrow order them into his scullery or kitchen, or send them, as swineherds or miners, to their village; so he can their children, brought up in all the refinements of luxury. The law does not allow him to strike a slave, unless he be a certain number of miles removed from a police station; he may then inflict any amount of corporal punishment, provided the slave does not die within three days of it. But if he dies upon the spot,—as no accusation of a slave can be received against his master,—although surrounded by the whole village, witnesses to the execution, there is no means of legally convicting the cruel lord. On the other hand, if there be a police station within a given distance, the master can at any time send his male or female slaves to be beaten with rods. The slave is allowed to make no defence; it is not even discretionary with the low police official not to inflict the punishment; he can only limit the amount of it; and as his real salary is derived from the annual present of the master, the latter always finds it necessary to order moderation instead of enjoining severity. The slave may be sent back as often as the master chooses. If he die on the spot, there is no responsibility for any party.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SERF—THE COSSACS—CORRUPTION OF RUSSIAN
OFFICIALS.

IF we put together the facts contained in the preceding chapter, and remember that on the zeal which the police officer may shew, in attending to the wishes of the master, (and which bears a hideous resemblance to that of the tradesman solicitous of obtaining fresh custom by giving every satisfaction to his employers,) depend the periodic bribes, the aggregate of which tenfold exceeds his miserable salary, it is obvious how arbitrarily the power of torture, and of life and death, is vested in the baron of the Russian serf. This is the case with one-half of the forty-five millions of moujiks.

Reflection must of course render it self-evident,—depending, as the fate of these peasants does, upon the temper, character, and circumstances of innumerable landlords, whose minds and hearts must differ, as those of all men do, as much as their features,—that nothing can be more dissimilar than their treatment and material condition in different parts of the empire.

The good slave-master, as the Emperor Alexander said of himself to Madame de Staël, is but a "fortunate accident." To prevent the oppression of his slaves, a passive benevolence will be no more effective than was that of Alexander, to relieve the ruthless oppression under which his subjects suffered. Experience everywhere shews us how easily the disposition of even the better portion of mankind is ruined by irresponsible power, and hardened by the habitual spectacle of any sort of misery. The author has seen a Russian lady who had just capriciously ordered the cruel castigation of her household slaves, weep over the fate of a butterfly which had strayed into the bower that adorns the boudoir of a Russian dame, and burned its wings at a lighted taper.

But we know that everywhere the better is unfortunately not the larger portion of human nature. Moreover, in Russia, amongst slave-masters, all grades have not only the opportunities and the temptations to oppression, but all are further hardened by that to which they are themselves incessantly subjected from a superior authority. One frown on the emperor's brow, one cold look or word from the empress, may react on the backs of slaves thousands of miles away—slaves as unconscious of the primary cause of their suffering, as man may be of the inscrutable designs of a Providence he cannot comprehend.

Not only must all that has been said be thrown into the balance, in estimating the chances the serf may have of belonging to a moderate and merciful master, but even if thus far favoured, how much does not again depend on whether such a lord personally visits his estates, on the agents he employs, and again on

the state of his fortune. If, as it is so unusual, not given to extravagance, he may be in the iron gripe of some government office; some terrible penalty for some trifling offence may be hanging over him for years, which he can only avert by allowing his wealth to be squeezed from him, and then, in return, he must squeeze his peasantry.

Slavery and oppression have, on the other hand, so far degraded the nature of the peasant, engendering in him that sullen and enduring obstinacy which we perceive in so many of the beasts of burthen, that he is prone to take advantage of the sympathies of too kind a landlord. The long contemplation of extortion and cruelty, allied in unvarying proportion to power, has engraven amongst the convictions of his race, an utter disbelief in the possible existence of any benevolence at variance with interest, and he regards it therefore as the offspring of weakness or folly, instead of with any gratitude. If his master ceases one moment to take advantage of the slave, the slave begins to take advantage of the master; and if, in his shrewdness, he suspects that the spectacle of a little cruelty will work upon his weakness, he endures the cruelty.

We should never, however, forget that fatal experience has taught the moujik that the kindness and forbearance of a master are always ephemeral. A master changes, sells his estates, or dies, but wealth hoarded and concealed is a certain and unvarying friend. And we must also remember that in Russia, money, so powerful a motive of action with all mankind, has a double value. In other countries it may procure enjoyments, but in the Russian empire, besides doing this, it wards off three-fourths of the oppression and the evil which afflict all classes.

Perhaps, on the whole, the locality which they inhabit more influences the destiny of the Russian peasantry than the characters and temper of their masters. If in one district they may be living in abundance, in others literally starving, so general is oppression where it is worth while to oppress, that, in nine cases out of ten, the condition of the happier portion will be found owing to the unsaleable quality of the produce of the estates they occupy.

Where communication with any market is easy, even in fertile wheat countries, everything but the stubble is cleared away and sold by the rapacious overseer. On others, where corn and hay will not pay the carriage except at unusual prices, immense granaries get stocked with the crop of many harvests, and the peasantry attain to a considerable point of comfort and affluence. The condition of the serfs is almost invariably better on a poor soil, of which the produce is beyond the reach of a ready market, than on the richest, of which it may be converted into money. Thus, whilst in one government, or in one district, the staff of life is mouldering in magazines, in another, by the joint improvidence of the lord and of his serfs, the failure of one harvest reduces the population to the horrors of absolute famine. Their lord is now obliged to step into their assistance; he must pledge his estates to purchase corn, lest the imperious laws of hunger should drive all his serfs to wander away. Before this relief can be afforded, which the want of roads, the vast distances, and the consequent cost of transport, render so expensive, it may be imagined what the poor serfs must suffer. Driven to eat the bark of trees, to fill their stomachs

with fat clay, when numbers have perished, they generally scatter themselves in different directions in quest of food, and, like a wandering hive of bees, are mostly enticed and secured by the proprietors of the first estates not suffering under the same pressure. Here they receive the passports, or poll-tickets, of some deceased slaves, and as all parties have an equal interest to be silent about the matter, in their new abode they generally end their days undiscovered.

It is this practice of placing upon the village registers one man in the shoes of another, when one proprietor entices the runaway serf of another estate, together with a similar custom observed by the authorities of the towns of southern Russia, which has given rise to the statistical accounts of extreme longevity in this empire. These instances of extraordinary old age are only to be found amongst the northern serfs and the southern townsmen, and amongst neither of these classes do we notice either any large proportion of old men, or even those signs of wearing well, and of heartiness, observable amongst the aged of all those parts of Europe in which the longevity of the population has been satisfactorily established.

It is true that the lord is bound to feed his slaves, and that, in the event of his not doing so, or of any other ill treatment, his estate may be placed under the tutelage of a court, presided over by the marshal of the nobility of the government in which it is situated. But practically this is never done, excepting where there may be least cause, and only as a mode of oppression exercised towards some proprietor who has incurred the displeasure of some powerful official. When there is real cause for interference, a sufficient

bribe, or a friend in power, suffices to adjourn the cause of the starving peasant *sine die*.

In retracing all the annals of the Muscovite race, no less than in closely examining their present character, we are struck with its patient powers of endurance. The Muscovite has at last become powerful, and triumphed over all his enemies, by a mere passive vitality; like a young whale assailed by small fierce dog-fish, he has continued to suffer and grow beneath their inflictions, till they had no hold on the gigantic carcase, which crushed as it rolled over them. The authentic portions of the early history of this race, down to a comparatively recent period, are one unbroken series of subjugations and sufferings beneath the ravages and rule of Normans, Mongols, Tartars, Swedes, and Poles. The Muscovite race was less tired and exhausted by being conquered, than all its foes by their conquests; and the comparative fecundity of Russian mothers, who bore children ten times faster than the swords of fierce invaders could kill them, has at last given to it the empire of a large portion of the east.

The Hebrews and the gipsies have outlived the persecution and the captivity of centuries; but the Muscovites increased and grew too powerful under it for any foreign bonds to hold them. In the class of peasantry we still trace everywhere the main characteristics of their forefathers; they increase beneath misery and oppression which would wither any other stock; they display the same passive endurance, the same attachment to locality, the same want of pugnacity. In compensation of many evils, nature has bestowed upon the peasant a mirthful, happy, and

contented disposition; naturally, he is as little cruel as he is warlike or courageous.

The social system itself has perhaps introduced into his character its egotistical and servile apathy under oppression; for constant and sanguinary examples prove to us that his enduring patience has bounds, however surprisingly remote these limits may appear to the more fiery blood of other races; and when he once oversteps them, then all the wrongs that have ever blighted his existence seem to crowd into his present thoughts, and the ferocity of his despair has nothing wherewith one can compare it.

When the peasants of an estate, or of a certain district, have been writhing beneath an oppression which the author will not venture to describe, but of which, before finishing these volumes, the reader may form some faint idea, some fresh insult or injury, inflicted when the measure of their patience is full, causes it to brim over, and then is enacted, in deeply exaggerated colours, those sanguinary scenes of the feudal days of France, when serfs arose against their lords with the sole view of taking one deep draught of revenge, and then seeking refuge in the grave from the intolerable ills of life. The unknown Siberia, with its dimly pictured horrors, ceases at last to have any terrors for the serf, when he contrasts it with his situation. "The worst that can happen is, that a few hundred should perish under the knout, the rest of the village be transported to Asia. That worst is better than his present condition." With this reflection begins the bloody saturnalia; the proprietors, the overseers, and the agents of their tyranny, together with their wives and children, old or pregnant women,

and young tender girls, raised in an artificial atmosphere, like exotics, to premature womanhood,—all are made to perish in tortures which would often shame the ingenuity of the Red Indian. The torch is next applied to the dwellings of the lord and his agents, perhaps to the whole village, and the drunken wretches who have plundered it perish in the flames, and drop from the falling beams like scorched flies.

These insurrections have never any political origin ; they have no connexion ; they are not even inspired by a hope ; they are equally isolated in their rise and their suppression.

When such an insurrection has been put down, the ringleaders knouted to death, and a few villages transplanted to Siberia, the whole affair dies away. It may have been known in the immediate neighbourhood ; it is known to the immediate relatives and friends of the murdered proprietors ; but it never spreads beyond this narrow circle, and is a subject on which no one cares to dwell. The press, which, even when inevitable accidents occur, is the last to circulate the public rumour, and then only does so to extenuate their extent, of course never alludes to these gloomy events. It is not allowed in the Russian dominions to publish even the commonest advertisement in a newspaper, without previously obtaining the authorization of the censorship.

These revolts of villages are constantly taking place ; but unless the traveller should pass within a few miles of the spot, or unless he happen, during a protracted residence, and constant intermixture with the natives, to meet with individuals who have either witnessed them or suffered by them, they are little likely to come his knowledge.

The author remembers seeing an officer grossly maltreating his servant, and accompanying every blow and injurious expression with reproaches of his ingratitude. "Didn't I save you, you rascal, from going to Siberia?" On inquiring into the story, the officer himself related, that during an insurrection, in which his family perished, he had been shut up in a wooden outhouse containing the bath-room, and to this fire had been set. His faithful slave, by raising the alarm of the approach of Cossacs, and then concealing him in an adjacent building, saved him from the fury of the mob. The master subsequently saved him from the exile with which the whole village was punished; but perhaps the reader may not feel disposed to coincide in the opinion he seemed to entertain, that he had balanced the debt of gratitude in his favour.

The foreign land steward of some vast estate in the government of Perm, related to the author that he never ventured to spend the night in any of the villages belonging to his master, his immediate predecessor having disappeared, with two or three servants accompanying him, and all search for him having proved fruitless. The same thing had happened formerly on the same domain, and within a recent date, on several adjacent ones. The Permaks, or Permesse, are, however, not Muscovite; they are of mixed Finnish and Mongolian origin, and always shew in their demeanour a sullen dislike.

Within the space of about three months from each other, the author became immediately acquainted with the two following instances among the purely Muscovite population:—A young officer received by letter, whilst he was present, an account from his father

of the utter devastation of their estate, with its usual accompaniments of incendiarism and bloodshed. In this case, the insurrection had spread over a considerable tract of country, yet he never heard it alluded to in the capital except by another sufferer, a neighbour and friend of the first. The next instance, of which it will be as well to abridge the very horrible details, the author learned from the brother of the land steward of the estate on which it took place. He had himself seen this man depart with his wife from his brother's some months previously, to take charge of an estate said to be small and in wretched condition. To judge from his conversation, it was evident that he would be no very merciful master. He observed, "that there was no village so poor that something might not be squeezed from it." The wife seemed rather more eager than the husband. The author saw him start in his kibitka, in which, amongst other things, he embarked a large violoncello, an instrument on which he professed himself an accomplished performer. A few months after, husband and wife had both been murdered in a rising of the slaves. The brother, in narrating it, spoke of them as the mildest of human beings, and considered the conduct of the serfs as utterly unprovoked; but however that might be, nothing could well exceed the ferocity to which they had been roused. The old woman was scalded to death in a hot cauldron, the steward tortured to death, and his intestines, in derision, twisted into strings for his favourite violoncello.

It is not unfrequently argued in favour of Russian servage, that in many parts the peasantry look sleek, contented, and happy. But it should be remembered

how little constitutes perfect affluence for a Russian serf, and that when he has even risen to the rank of Meschinine, or of a wealthy agriculturist, he is rendered happy by the addition to his black bread, salt, and cabbage-pies, of a pickled herring, a little dark treacle-coloured oil, sipped with the spoon like broth, and a little tallow, or salt butter, to add to his buck-wheat.

On the other hand, it is quite unfair to compare the condition of the Russian peasantry of those districts which are allowed to enjoy a considerable degree of material prosperity, with that of the population of western Europe, densely crowded, and suffering from historic causes. The rich and luxuriant virgin soil of the territory they inhabit requires only that they should be *permitted* to become wealthy; we can only fairly contrast them with the settlers of the western states of North America.

Of all places, it is argued, assuredly the Russian empire is the one in which the theory and practice of institutions are most at variance, and where custom has become the most general law. Now, is it not true that the great majority of the wealthy men in the empire (not being themselves slave-holders) are to be found amongst the slaves? Are there not slave proprietors, who take a pride in having prosperous and wealthy slaves, and who exact no higher capitation tax from the rich than from the poor? The Shermietieffs, who are the owners of half the fruiterers in St. Petersburg, and of some of the richest commercial men in that city,—have they not, by their capital, their influence, and their weight, aided them to this result? Has not the slave this further advantage over the freeman, that he cannot be made liable for any

debt exceeding five shillings? Have not these serfs a protection extended to them from their lords, who exert all their influence in their favour, which as freed men, they might be entirely without? And is it not of rare occurrence to find any of these wealthy slaves stripped of their fortunes by their lords?

In the first place, it must be observed, that slaves are not frequently stripped of their wealth by their masters, because it is only under indulgent masters that they attain it. In the next place, although the prosperity of the slave is trumpeted forth, he does not dare, nor does his master care, that anything should be said about his spoliation.

A plain, old, honest English author, one Captain John Perry, who served as engineer under Peter the Great, and published an account of Muscovy in 1716, says at that time, talking of the wrongs of those under him—

“When I have promised that I would do my utmost, and engage to obtain right for them, they have thereupon begged of me by no means to mention the things which they have complained of, alleging this for their reason, that even though they should obtain right at that time, yet that they were sure afterwards to suffer, and to be ruined for their complaining of those in power over them, who would mark them out as informers.”

This as perfectly applies to Russia now as at the time it was written; it is the *reason* of John Perry's subordinates, that allows no voice to be raised in complaint within the Russian empire. The wrongs of free countries, like their beggars, crowd themselves with importunity upon your notice; in Russia, both must

be sought out in their dens of misery, or they will escape observation.

It is quite true that some wealthy proprietors not only take a pride in the prosperity of their slaves, but largely contribute to it. It is not long since a very wealthy fruiterer (and the St. Petersburg fruiterers are all wealthy, combining the sale of wines, of grocery, and comestibles, with that of foreign fruit) offended a lady, who complained to the military governor of St. Petersburg. The military governor peremptorily ordered his shop to be shut up. Had the fruiterer been a freedman he would have had no redress, but he was a slave of the Countess Sheremetieff. He threw himself at her feet, and implored her intercession. The countess, who had the ear of the empress, caused her complaint to be laid before the emperor, and thus obtained for her slave immediate redress.

But even the pride of being owner of the wealthiest and happiest slaves in the empire has serious drawbacks; these very Sheremetieffs, like most of the other proprietors who entertain this pride, are as unwilling to part with a rich slave, as a numismatist with a rare medal of his collection, or a florist with a valuable root. Thus to the merchant, the very disinterestedness which has enabled him to attain prosperity is fatal to his chances of liberty. A rapacious master might be tempted by his hoarded gold to sell him—to himself!

It may be said, why wish to extricate himself from bonds so gentle? But the merchant-slave with his five or ten thousand a year, whose children have been brought up to the elegancies of life, can never forget that he himself, and all that are dear to him, may tomorrow pass into the hands of the heir of his present

master, and that his new proprietor may have less taste for a collection of the wealthiest and happiest slaves in the empire, than for the wealth they had collected.

It is customary, in most villages of slaves, for the lord to allow a determined proportion of them to quit their village, and flock to the towns to obtain work, to trade, or hire themselves out as servants; and they pay a proportionate tax, called the *abrok*. If a peasant is found without his lord's passport, or without papers proving him to be a freeman, he is advertised in the public papers like a stray head of cattle, and if unclaimed, is eventually transferred to the domain of the crown. The *Journal de St. Petersburg*, as well as all the other newspapers of the empire, devotes on each appearance a column to this list of runaway slaves.

It is singular enough, that even in Russia the advantages of voluntary labour over that which is compulsory, are tacitly recognised. It is common to find the proprietor of a thousand slaves hiring, as domestic servant, the slave of another, and paying him high wages.

If by dint of exertion the slave thus allowed to seek his fortune can succeed in trade, or in hoarding up money to pay the proper fees, he becomes a *meschinine*. Once a *meschinine*, according to the annual dues which he can afford to pay, he may become a third, a second, or a first guild merchant; which latter gives him the privilege of driving four horses in his carriage, even though he may not have succeeded in purchasing his personal freedom from his lord; and should he have become a freeman, he cannot be a holder of slaves—a right reserved to

nobility; and, by virtue of his office, every official whose rank corresponds with that of ensign is a nobleman.

Another amphibious class of shopkeepers and traders is now springing up in St. Petersburg and Moscow, the offspring of the bearded merchant of the last generation. It consists of men who shave their chins, wear round hats, and who supersede the oriental caftan by a long-tailed great coat, a compromise betwixt the two. Though they still cross themselves devoutly before their images, they do not rigidly observe the fasts, and sneer, not only at their popes, but at the temporal as well as spiritual authorities. It is clear that for them the prestige of the infallibility of priests and emperor has departed for ever; but fortunately for the latter, though some of the moujiks constantly join this class, none of this class ever join and contaminate with their scepticism the peasantry; the stream thus running always downwards.

It is necessary again to repeat that all that has been said regarding the mode of life and condition of the peasantry, does not apply to the inhabitants of Little Russia, Bessarabia, or the territories settled on by the Cossac race. These people have never undergone the yoke of private servitude, and the Cossacs, even at present, are allowed considerable freedom. Their principal occupations being pastoral, and living in countries of which the staple commodity is cattle, where the ox is killed and boiled down for its hide and fat, and the flesh even sometimes thrown away, they live more upon animal than vegetable food. These causes concur to give them a healthiness of appearance, a strength of muscle, and an independence of mien, which distinguish them from their Muscovite brethren.

If on the inhabitants of Bessarabia the extortions of government agents has already imposed a very heavy yoke, the Cossacs, a fiery and restive people, have been handled with great tenderness, and it is only on the liberties of the Don Cossacs that the crown has yet ventured warily to infringe. Passionately fond of war, and of a nomade disposition, they are naturally the most enterprising race in Europe. A few Cossacs effected the conquest of Siberia; a handful of Cossacs penetrated to Kamtschatka, and crossed to the American continent. In following, or rather preceding the Russian armies, in the late war on the continent of Europe, no danger deterred them from pushing forward in every direction, with a boldness unknown to the foragers of other nations, and guided by a remarkable instinct, which in the midst of strange countries, when they could not make themselves understood, enabled them always to regain their direction. On horseback from their youth, they are all warriors, and the military service which each man is called on to perform, for a few years, under the command of his own officers, is more often anticipated with pleasure than dislike. They live generally contented beneath the rule of Russia, and are occupied by her to guard her extensive frontier. Established on the Kouban, they form a barrier against the inroads of the Circassians, and detached to watch all the inlets to this immense empire, we find the Cossac, with his wide trousers, his visorless chako, and his pennonless lance, on the Danube, on the shores of the Gulf of Bothnia, and on the borders of China.

As long as the Emperors of Russia pursue the policy of conciliating this remarkable people, they will have

at their disposal the materials for the finest cavalry in Europe—a people probably the last whom the light of civilization will detach from their allegiance, so long as employment is allowed to the marauding horseman, or the daring soldier.

It has been shewn that private servitude, or slavery, exists in the Russian empire, with at least as much, or probably more severity, than slavery has ever done between any masters and slaves, not only of the same race, but of the same origin, in any country, or at any period with which we are acquainted.

We have seen the condition of nearly five-and-twenty millions of private serfs; of these serfs the Emperor Nicholas is avowedly the great liberator. Since Catherine, this has indeed been the undeviating policy of the Russian sovereigns, but the present emperor pursues it with redoubled energy. The Emperor Nicholas is the greatest abolitionist, but he is also the greatest slave-holder, in the world. This is meant not politically speaking, although it is true that, as regards all his subjects, this title might be given him, in contradistinction to all the other despotic sovereigns of Europe. It is meant in the common and literal acceptance of the term. He is the possessor of upwards of twenty millions of serfs, or nearly as many as all his nobles put together.

These serfs of the emperor stand in precisely the same relation to him as the private serfs to their own proprietors, and this of course is quite independently of their relation as subjects, in which sense they only share with the highest of the land the degradation of being the absolute slaves of his will.

As the proprietor of serfs, the emperor, who has

bound himself by his own laws, cannot, any more than any other proprietor, *legally* take the life of a serf; but as emperor, whose every command is a fresh law, he has absolute power over the lives and fate both of slaves and their masters.

The serfs of the imperial domain are, it is true, happier than the serfs belonging to private individuals, or at least they are so as a class. They enjoy such advantages as those peasants possess who do not belong to a needy master; but they also suffer all the inconveniences of the former when the number and extent of that master's estates leave them entirely to the care of agents and subordinates. It is evident that the emperor feels a peculiar interest in these serfs; something of what a French author calls "*l'orgueil de propriétaire*;" and therefore these agents and subordinates are obliged to hold some measure in their oppression of them, lest their cries should reach the imperial ear. On the other hand, when the reader has become a little further acquainted with the cruelty, rapacity, and venality of all the petty tyrants to whom the power of the emperor is delegated, he will readily judge that even this qualification leaves the crown serfs in no very enviable condition. As contrasted with that of private slaves, it is more even; the crown serf is never reduced to the same abject misery, never reduced to turn like the trampled worm; but at the same time, those who administer the imperial domain never allow him to obtain the same prosperity which we have seen some benevolent or capricious masters foster with sedulous care. On the whole, however, the transference from his lord to an

imperial master is looked forward to as advantageous, by the great mass of the slave population.

The emperor, the greatest proprietor in the empire, is an abolitionist, as far as regards the slaves of all other proprietors. Every fresh ukase, every fresh regulation, has an ulterior tendency to free the serf from the yoke of his baron. If a Russian noble is pressed for money, the government grants mortgage after mortgage, which his extravagance seldom allows him to redeem, and thus his slaves pass away from his control. If he neglects, for three generations, to attain the necessary rank, his slaves equally pass away.

The inquiry naturally suggests itself, when we hear of the efforts the emperor makes to free these serfs, and couple it with the fact that he is himself so large a slave-holder, *why he does not begin by emancipating his own?* And, God knows, the arbitrary nature of his government would render this emancipation as nominal and illusory as the liberation of an imprisoned bird from its cage into a narrow room. But how ought we to characterize this vaunted liberality when, on examination, we find that in three-fourths of the eventualities which free the slave from the yoke of his private master, *he passes directly into the domain of the crown?*

It is true that all the soldiers in his army, nearly all drafted from the private serfs, as soon as their term of service is expired, receive their manumission, and are freed men, neither slaves of their old master nor of the imperial domain. This term of service is indeed limited on paper; but in reality it is only limited by

such infirmity as renders the soldier useless in the imperial armies; then and then only is he turned adrift, and no longer a bondsman of the soil.

What is the use of this liberty to him then? His children are also nominally free; but how is the ill-fed Russian soldier, whose pay is only a few shillings a year, to provide for children? He is obliged to demand for them the bread of the crown, and to enter them in its service. The service for them endures, as we have seen it for himself, till man has become a useless wreck.

Of all things the slave dreads being drafted for the army by his master. When every means of punishment have been resorted to, this is the threat held out, and the recruits are sent heavily ironed together, like Siberian convicts. It is true, the natural dread the moujik has of war, and his pacific disposition, have a large share in his aversion to a military life; but its horrors, and the illusory nature of the hopes it ostensibly holds out, have more.

It will be seen, by the perusal of the following pages, that the Russian nobility gave the Emperor Nicholas some cause for dread and enmity, and it will be seen with what an unrelenting and vindictive spirit he has since pursued this body. When we remember that the nobility are the principal slaveholders, may we not be permitted to inquire whether his personal feeling towards them has had no share in the anxiety he evinces to remove the serfs from their control?

Having passed in brief review the power, and the elements of power, at the disposal of the Russian emperor, the man who fills that station, and the most

important classes of the population of his empire, let us proceed to examine more closely the causes before alluded to, which not only paralyze and weaken its mighty framework, but at every step render nugatory the exertion of his authority to improve and civilize—an object the Emperor Nicholas decidedly bears in view whenever it does not interfere with his vindictive prejudices against his nobles, the policy of his ambitious house, or his exalted ideal of imperial omnipotence. It is true there are few possible ameliorations in the condition of his subjects which do not give umbrage to some of these interests; but on that account it is the more lamentable to see those which escape these complicated limitations fall as it were still-born to the ground.

The causes which not only limit the power of the Russian emperor, but, pervading the whole edifice of Russian civilization, render all real progress difficult, and dissolution probable, are to be found in the unblushing venality and corruption of all who wear the imperial button, and of all who are employed in any capacity, high or low, in any branch of the administration. From the door of the emperor's ante-chamber, from the high officials of his court down to the sentinel at his gate, every man is an extortioner and a public robber, and all are united in one vast conspiracy to deceive the only man in the empire who cannot be bribed—the possessor of it. It has been cynically said, in allusion to the foibles of human nature, "*that every man has his price*"—a sweeping assertion, which we once deemed only to be true by giving a wide latitude to the meaning these words immediately convey, and supposing that every man may be influenced

to some dereliction of conscientious duty, by the possible combination and agency of his passionate feelings, and affections. But in Russia it is a lamentable fact, that this epigrammatic sentence bears a literal and universal application, for *every man has his price in money*. The minister, the judge, the general, the admiral, the long list of subordinates which complete the links of this chain, down to the petty *chenownik*, the serjeant, the boatswain, the *boutuschnik*, and the executioner, must all be included in the censure. From high to low, all equally conspire to rob the government by their peculations, and the public by their extortions, making the power with which an arbitrary system invests them, down to the last refraction of sub-delegated authority, a matter of notorious purchase.

No inhabitant of old Western Europe can form an idea of the extent of the universal corruption of the Russian employées. It is true, he cannot cross the portals of that empire, without having repeated and annoying proofs of the disgusting venality and rapacity of the inferior class of officials with whom he comes in contact. But it is still impossible for him to conceive, until he sees, the same spirit pervading all those whose exalted station in every other country places them above suspicion. Having seen, and thus believed, he can yet only account for this deplorable fact by the knowledge that an ingredient is utterly wanting in all classes of Russian society, which has in some measure identified itself with the very nature of even the lowest classes in his own, and which leaves a gulf of distinction between them, wider than that which nature has drawn betwixt any of the varied coloured races—black or red or white.

It is the absence of that chivalric feeling which has tintured all classes of society, and which either gave rise to a sense of human dignity in modern Europe, or perhaps arose from it. The polish of manners, the apparent refinement of sentiment, the careful education of the most brilliant men of Russian drawing-rooms, have no more instilled one spark of this spirit into them than it has of the blood of another people. Beneath such an exterior, modelled after our own, still beats the heart of the Asiatic, and not even of the Asiatic, into whom the Saracen, in spreading the empire of his prophet, infused something of those chivalrous ideas which the Arab race seems to have shared with the Scandinavian and Germanic.

The author feels that the reader may consider him as almost too sweeping in the preceding denunciations, until he shall have shewn him one of the principal favourites of the Emperor Nicholas—a man whose power far exceeds that of half-a-dozen German princes united; till he has shewn him a personage whose name has become celebrated in history, who was many years the intimate friend of one of the first crowned heads in Europe, and is now elevated to one of the most lucrative posts in the empire; till he shews that individual connected with the court, holding his daily levees, and receiving a crowd of contractors, suitors, German tradesmen, French artistes, actresses, and courtesans, with whom he bargains for the amount of the perquisite which is to secure the imperial custom and his own protection; till he has shewn a general officer, a judge of one of the highest courts, unblushingly, and in a business-like manner, naming the amount of the bribe he requires; colonels and majors in rank

pocketing for the same purpose a five-rouble note (4s. 6d); a senator giving up his own favourite nephew to the executioner, when—half frozen by spending part of a winter's night under the arch of a bridge, and just escaped from the massacre of the 25th of December—he sought an hour's refuge beneath his roof; and further, though not lastly, till he shews the family of Troubetzkoi, whose claim is more legitimate to the throne of the tsars than that of the Romanoffs, all licking the dust beneath the emperor's footsteps, and fawning and flattering, through every humiliation, whilst the head of their house is kept in Siberia, with an unrelenting hate that no suffering of his heroic wife could touch—no length of years or enduring devotion soften.

The pay of all the officials in the Russian empire is still nominally as it was fixed several reigns ago. The luxurious habits of society, and the high price of all luxuries in the Russian empire, now render at least threefold its amount almost indispensable. Instead of this, the paper rouble has fallen in value to two-sevenths, and they are paid in paper roubles. About nine-tenths of the income of all civil and military officers must therefore be made up by fraud; and when once this system is adopted by a community, it is not to be expected that they will limit themselves to what is strictly necessary; neither do they.

There are three principal modes of extorting bribes, which are practised from the cabinet minister down to the watchman in the street; by the direct threat and practice of oppression, by the sale of favours, or by withholding the performance of a duty until bribed. The reader should be at once informed that all this

peculation is carried on in the face of a law which dooms to degradation the highest authority in the empire, if only convicted of receiving a present. It is also carried on in the face of severe examples now and then made by different emperors. But these examples, being infrequent and capricious, are considered by those they are intended to deter as amongst the accidents of life; if ever so frequently repeated, the rooted habits of a century and a half, the impossibility of maintaining even the decencies of life without them, would probably render the Russians only more cautious in concealing their delinquencies, without their ever dreaming of altogether avoiding them.

Even the energetic Peter the First, who spared no blood, no cruelties, who tore through the very bonds of natural affection when he had a favourite object to carry; the man who cut off heads with his own hand, who put to death two thousand of his revolted Strelitzers, and allowing their heads to freeze to the trunk from which they were dissevered, left them, the five months winter through, a ghastly row of corpses, in fearful example of his vengeance; the man who doomed and wrought the death of his first-born—even this terrible Peter utterly failed in his attempts to stop the venality which we can at least trace back thus far. In vain he denied the prayer of his favourite empress, the wife of the Swedish trooper, and tore from her side her favourite to break him on the wheel, and inflict corporal punishment on his sister, because they had sold the imperial favour. We learn from Norberg, the chaplain of the Swedish Achilles, that, notwithstanding these examples, Peter's chief favourite, Menchicoff, could not resist a bribe from Mazeppa, to lull the

suspensions of the tsar, and cloak the meditated rebellion of the Hetman's vassals.

So long as public opinion makes no distinction between the infamous gains produced by the sale of justice and duty, and those the most legitimately earned, this traditionary vice must necessarily endure. When we consider the rooted prejudices which the savage energy of Peter enabled him to subdue, perhaps we have hardly a right to doubt that even the venality which corrodes the core of Russian strength might be triumphed over; but it would require no less than the genius of Peter—a genius which it would be futile to deny the great barbarian, but which has been lamentably wanting in all his male successors, although the flattery of courtiers has made each in turn believe that it was resuscitated in his person.

No one could hitherto have gone further from the course proper to produce so desirable a result than Nicholas I. For instance, he has ordained that every decision shall be strictly legal. In the preceding reigns of Paul and Alexander, even this formality was despised; *the formality* is now attended to. The president of a tribunal, or his secretary, finds amongst the contradictory mass of ukases something to fit the decision in every case brought before them with a semblance of legality; but the decision is not the less a matter of purchase than it was before. And how is it possible that it should be otherwise, when the legitimate remuneration of the judge will hardly pay his lacquey? Without a tenfold increase of the salaries of all the officers of the empire, the idea of reform in this matter is an utter and absurd chimera. But even if the finances of the state admitted of this provision,

by great sacrifices, reducing the number of those employed, it offers still extraordinary difficulties, and when the long habit of corruption is considered, the civil and military officers of the empire might think like the nobleman's butler in the old Joe Miller tale, who, when offered an increase of wages to be strictly honest, candidly answered that it would not pay.

It has been asserted that the emperor, here and there, at long intervals, punishes these malpractices; but almost always the cases he selects, or which come to his notice, are comparatively far from flagrant, and the punishment is utterly useless as a warning. Here are two instances:—A fire took place in Cronstadt, in the summer, and it was found that there was not a horse on the island in which it is situated, although the police master had for years charged for the keep of a large number; he was degraded to a private sailor. The very instalment of his successor began by the extortion of a bribe.

Two years ago, the bank surveyor in the mortgaging department was applied to by an aide-de-camp of the emperor's, to value a house he intended pledging to the bank. The surveyor observed, "My charge is 2,000 roubles (90*l.*); pay them down, and I will give a good valuation without looking at the place, otherwise it shall not be valued at all for weeks, and undervalued then." The aide-de-camp reported the affair to the emperor; the surveyor was sent to the galleys. Three days after, in the same office, a similar demand was made to a fresh applicant.

It is part of the duties of the secret police, which we shall presently proceed to examine, to endeavour to detect all flagrant instances of this nature; and here

and there, when the extortion of an official or of a department is becoming too notorious, some significant hint is thrown out; but the secret police, like all the other servants of the state, have too great an interest in the maintenance of this order of things, the interest which fundholders have to respect the national debt, ever seriously to interfere with it. Wherever an individual is sacrificed, he falls a victim to the private pique of some offended superior, and when this is understood, no one takes an interest in his fate; but if it were a *bonâ fide* punishment of public robbery and extortion, he would arouse the sympathies of all his fellow accomplices, that is, of all the civil and military officers of the empire.

A poor nobleman had been carrying on a lawsuit for several years, when he received an intimation from the secretary of the tribunal, that unless he paid over 10,000 roubles (450*l.*) to the president, the case would be decided against him. The unfortunate litigant, who could not raise as many pence, bethought him of applying to Count Benkendorf, the chief of the secret service, whom he had been led to believe was personally anxious to make an example of some of the delinquents, and who is one of the four or five men holding office in the empire, who are deemed incorruptible by the common rumour—or at least, if the Russians utterly disbelieve in the existence of an unlimited integrity, of whom they say, “We do not think even such a sum would buy him.” The party referred to offered the count to furnish him with an unquestionable proof of the venality of the president of the Court of Appeal; and for that purpose proposed that he should be entrusted with the amount of the bribe de-

manded, in notes privately marked. He undertook that these notes should be found on the president's person. The count consented. Since the good old times of the reign of Alexander, neither the secretaries, vice-presidents, nor presidents, (the parties who in the courts of law receive all bribes affecting the immediate decision of civil or criminal cases,) ever make their bargain or receive any money before a third party. Their dread of the anger of Nicholas even occasions them to resort to many precautions formerly not dreamed of; and in this instance the president declined receiving the money in his house, but proposed that the litigant should invite him to dinner at a tavern which he indicated, and there pay over the amount to him.

It must here be observed, that it is not unusual in Russia for the judge to be thus treated. Let the reader imagine the Lord Chancellor of England taking a white-bait dinner at Greenwich with one of the parties in whose case he was about to decide, and with whom he had only this professional acquaintance! However the judge's proposition was acceded to, and his host caused an officer of gendarmerie to be stationed in an adjacent closet. The president made his appearance; he signified, by the action of his fingers, that their pecuniary transaction had better precede the gastronomic entertainment; the host accordingly gave him over a small roll of bank notes, the president counted them in a very business-like way, and tossed them into his hat. As this was not yet quite satisfactory, in the hope that his guest would finally transfer the money to his person, his Amphitryon deferred giving the signal for the appearance of the

secret police agent, and they sat down to dinner. At this moment some one knocked ; it was the president's nephew, come to him with some trifling message from his lady. The judge gave him a brief answer, and bowed him out. At the conclusion of their dinner he was preparing to depart; he had pulled on his shube, and put his hat on his head; when, on the preconcerted signal, the officer of gendarmerie rushed into the apartment with an order from Count Benkendorff, whose dictum every dignitary in the empire must obey, to search his person. "Do not give yourself the trouble to search him," said the excited nobleman, "you will find the bank-notes in his hat." The president smiled blandly, and took his hat off at once: it was empty; when his nephew went out, he had taken up his uncle's hat instead of his own! The judge thus not only avoided the trap laid for him, but secured the bait, and doubly punished the informer; firstly, by deciding the case against him; and secondly, because, not having substantiated his charge, he was obliged to refund the ten thousand roubles advanced by the police. Can any one doubt that this worthy minister of public justice had received a private hint from Count Benkendorff's office?

The Emperor Alexander,—whose character presented a singular compound of liberal views, benevolent intentions, and clear-sighted shrewdness, with an indolent weakness, which allowed him, and consequently his empire, to be entirely governed by his confidants,—was perfectly conscious of this rottenness of the social system. As no flattery could make him believe that he was either a Peter the Great or a Napoleon, he never dreamed of undertaking a reform

perhaps the most difficult that has ever been attempted. He was perfectly aware that to have any chance of success, he must begin by raising tenfold the salaries of his officers, which the finances of the state would not have allowed him, and establishing an unlimited freedom of the press, which his ministers would have considered as the mad act of a political Frankenstein. As he wanted the energy to dispute the matter with his advisers, even when he felt their conduct to be cruel and foresaw it to be impolitic, he never dreamed of removing this mountain of social iniquity ; but he at least saw it exactly as it was ; and perfectly aware that unless the evil were cured at the root, any severity would prove utterly useless—a mere film over the ulcer—he allowed corruption to walk barefaced, instead of obliging it, as the severity of Nicholas has done, merely to veil itself from public view. He avenged himself for the public robberies of his servants by a quiet jest, and allowed his minister to discover, to fume, and to punish. He placidly observed of his Russian subjects, “ If they only knew where to warehouse them, they would purloin my line-of-battle ships—if they could do it without waking me, they would steal my teeth while I slept.”

The most august, or if it be derisory to apply that term to anything in such a country, the most important body in the empire is the high directing and legislative senate. One part of its business is to promulgate and watch over the laws on which it is sometimes consulted, the law being the ukase or imperial order ; it is also the supreme court of appeal. Its members are all old generals and admirals laid upon the shelf, and thus provided for—the rank of general

being, it must be remembered, indiscriminately given in the civil and the military service, and the directors of schools, manufactories, paper-mills, and water-works, sharing it with veterans, and equally wearing the uniform. These imperial senators, thus transformed into the interpreters of law, with which they are generally unacquainted, and more immediately under the eye of the emperor, are obliged to consult their secretaries. Their decisions must have a strictly legal colour, which it sometimes requires all the ingenuity of these adjuncts to impart to them.

The office of senator was formerly a lucrative one. The Emperor Nicholas has spoiled it; but the public have gained nothing,—the lawyer-secretaries of the senators now sharing the principal harvest, in which they were formerly glad of a slender participation. Such is the history of all these ill-timed and partial efforts at clearing out the Augean stable: like the blood on Blue Beard's key, in the children's story-books, it is wiped from one end to appear at the other.

Miloradovitch, who fell in the military insurrection of the 26th of December, 1825—a gallant old veteran, one of the last soldiers of the Suwarrow stamp and school, blunt, cynical, and incorruptible, because regardless of wealth,—when, shortly before his death, governor of St. Petersburg, turned the attention of the governing powers to the infamous and shameless corruption of this body. As military governor, it was his duty to countersign its decisions. The day previous to making his formal complaint, on account of the spirited bidding of the litigants in a law suit, it had altered its *supreme and final decision* three times in the four and-twenty hours, and shamelessly sent it to the veteran to confirm.

We have seen that the power of doing this, has chiefly passed from the hands of these conscript fathers into that of secretaries and underlings. Two winters ago, in St. Petersburg, the author of the "Life and Diary of a Travelling Physician," the talented translator of Goethe's *Faust*, on returning to his apartments, caught a burglar in the very act of his depredations; he turned out to be a *chenovnik*, or "man of rank" of the senate. It is more than questionable whether the public have profited by the transference from the senators to their secretaries and underlings.

The effect of this venality and corruption is not only remarkable in as far as it affects the happiness and prosperity of the Russian people—in as far as it saps all public and private morality—discolours into blackness the stream of justice at its very fount—and engenders every species of vice, misery, and oppression; but for its action in paralyzing the strength and power of the empire. Let us turn to the administration of its fleets, its arsenals, and its armies.

The hobby of the emperor and of the imperial family is their army of guards, which are all under their own eye, and the objects of their unceasing solicitude. But what a tale do not the hollow cheek and hungry-looking aspect of so many of them unfold!

In the multitudinous regiments of the line scattered over different governments, thousands of men and thousands of horses are paid for by the state, which have never existed. This indeed is a comparatively trifling evil, because experience has proved that whenever the framework (*cadres*) of a regiment is in good order, however suddenly its blanks may be filled by

recruits, it very speedily becomes as effective as if its full complement had never been diminished. But it is whenever these ill-fed soldiers have to be moved a few hundred miles, even within the limits of this interminable empire, that their sufferings fearfully increase. Whilst in quarters, the superior authority squeezes from their allowance of rations, pay, and clothing, the very utmost that will allow him to make, with his patient and uncomplaining men, such an appearance as may cover his responsibility, and he has generally calculated with minute nicety the extreme limit of endurance; but on a march, his subordinates, removed from his own surveillance, immediately pursue the same system on a body of which previous rapacity has already exhausted the vigour. Officers of all ranks, whoever, in short, has the charge for even half the day of any detachment, great or small, immediately makes his bargain with the contractors who should furnish provisions, the peasantry on whom the troops are quartered, the landed proprietors, or their agents; and if only for a good dinner and a bottle of champagne, the officer winks at the curtailment of the rations of his company. In fact, the soldier might often drop from inanition, if he in his turn did not extort from the peasantry what the regulation gives him as his right.

From the commander of a division to the corporal of an escouade, all pursue the same course, to which the only limit is the want of opportunity. What is most strange is, that even with the soldier, it hardly causes animadversion, so accustomed have the Russians become to look on all power and authority conferred by any military as well as any civil rank as a mere

opportunity of robbing subordinates. The ensign does not, even in his thoughts, visit his grievances on the captain, the non-commissioned officer on the ensign, or the private on the non-commissioned officer; but each looks forward anxiously to attaining the rank above him, to profit by its opportunities.

When destined for foreign service, at least half the strength of a regiment is wasted before reaching the distant frontier. From the nature of the Muscovite habits, and of their weak vegetable food, containing less nutriment than that which fattens English cattle, they would require peculiar care to prevent the dysenteries and epidemics which ravage their ranks like the diseases which carry off sheep and rabbits.

This weakened force, on crossing the frontier of the empire, is still entrusted to officers who, although receiving, whenever they have passed it, what is called the *silver-pay*, or threetimes and a half the usual allowance, can still only be deterred by the most imminent and pressing danger, from connivance with an administration so corrupt in all its branches as the commissariat, and which has so many and such extensive opportunities of robbing the soldier.

The details of the campaigns of the Russian armies in the more recent wars with Turkey and Poland, and, in fact, ever since the French revolution has introduced the fashion of moving large multitudes of men to decide the quarrels of nations or of princes, prove two remarkable facts, immediately deducible from the causes on which we have just been dwelling. The first is, that the Russian armies, when carrying war into an enemy's country not densely populated

and highly cultivated, melt away like wax in the summer's sun, and that it is only by dint of unceasing reinforcements, succeeding each other as wave succeeds wave, that they can be kept somewhere about the original point of effectivity.

Of course, wherever very large armies are brought on the theatre of war, this is, to a great extent, the case with every people in the world. But the losses of other nations—always, under these circumstances, great in themselves—are trifling compared to those the Russian troops have met with since the small armies of Suwarrow have been increased to the measure of modern continental strength. Napoleon has been not inappropriately termed “a conqueror at the rate of ten thousand men a day;” but if we include his disastrous campaigns in the account, we shall find his losses less in proportion to the masses moved, than the Russians experienced in the last successful invasions of Turkey and of Poland. All military men of experience are aware, but the public in general are ignorant, that in any lengthened campaigns the aggregate losses of all armies exceed many times—at least tenfold—the direct casualties of the field; that is to say, that where twenty thousand men have crossed a frontier, or landed in an enemy's country, and at the end of a few, or of many months, are reduced to half that number, it is hardly ever possible to account for the death of one thousand of them by the accidents of lead or steel, or fire or flood. The author has heard a veteran commander of armies observe, that he knew only one thing as difficult to account for, as what became of all the men that melt away from the muster-roll in long campaigns, and that was, what became of

all the pins that are manufactured? Now these losses, so great in every army, are almost as many times surpassed in those of Russia, as in other armies they exceed the number of the immediate victims of the battle-field, the skirmish, and the breach.

The second remarkable fact we have alluded to is, that the same causes limit the disponibility of the vast elements of force evidently contained in the tsar's empire. There can be no question that the Emperor Nicholas has at least the framework of a force of upwards of a million of men, and that therefore, if he has them not, he *might* have them, under arms, and indeed pays for their being so. The resources of his immense territory, and the unlimited control he has over it, necessarily furnish him with the pecuniary means of setting them in motion for a few campaigns, though they might fail him in a protracted war. And yet it is evident that, by straining every nerve, from 150 to 200,000 men is the utmost that he could send across a hostile frontier, and more than he could long maintain there. Under the system which has been described, Russian armies dwindle into brigades—brigades into battalions—before the distant frontier is reached;—there is an enemy unceasingly following, unceasingly decimating them—their own officers.

No severity, no example, can remedy this evil; the habit is too rooted in the people, it has become too innate a propensity. As well might you try to reclaim, by such means, a collection of drunkards or gamblers, surrounded by the temptation of casks and dice-boxes. The just indignation of a sovereign, and his unlimited power, may crush one offender beneath his heel, but he cannot reform or deter the next who steps into his place from following his example.

Perhaps it would not be inapt to compare the position of a Russian emperor, relatively to his people, to that of the brain animating the body and limbs of a vast muscular giant, but with all the nerves and sinews by which the head must set this body and these limbs in motion, feeble, relaxed, or brittle. There exists in the Russian empire no set of public officers who can be depended on, no material out of which to form them. Its government is reduced to the deplorable condition of not knowing where to find a man to whom it can intrust the care of any portion of its force or interest, so as to render the former fully available, or to be sure that the latter will not be betrayed. It has not merely to dread an occasional violation of its confidence, but to reckon on the certainty of it in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, and to estimate its probable amount. If it were possible to transfer the civil and military officers of the British empire into the places of those who administer the Russian, or, at least, to transfuse into their feelings and conduct something of their integrity, the power of Russia would be many times multiplied, and prove in reality what it now appears on paper.

If the army, the hobby of all successive Russian sovereigns, and of the whole imperial family, suffers thus from the depredations of its officials, the navy—the favourite creation of Peter the Great, neglected by all who followed him, until taken in hand by the Emperor Nicholas, against the wishes of all his advisers—offers a no less advantageous field for their malpractices; although here, as in every other department since the reign of the present emperor, these abuses have been forced to shun the light of day, in which before they carelessly sunned themselves.

It is true that the Russian navy, though fostered by the sedulous care of its first founder, like an exotic introduced into an unfavourable soil, would probably never have taken deep root under any management. Peter built a navy, organized it by means of foreign seamen, and conquered a vast maritime coast, in the hope that his Muscovites would in time become sailors to man it. All his successors neglected both his fleet and the views he entertained on the subject. The Emperor Nicholas has been the first sovereign since his reign who has attempted to revive its glories; but he has done so without bearing in mind the ideas of Peter on the subject—a neglect which renders the boldness of his ancestor's views an absurdity when thus carried out; unless, indeed, we are to suppose that the hopes of the present emperor's ambition soar to the visionary height of manning his numerous war ships with Swedish, Norwegian, or Danish subjects of his crown.

The two following anecdotes may serve to illustrate that, in point of the integrity of its administration, the navy enjoys no superiority over the land force; while in those chapters specially devoted to the condition of the marine and army, the reader will find ample additional evidence upon this subject. The Emperor Nicholas having been made acquainted, whilst grand duke, with the glaring malversations which took place in the naval arsenals of Cronstadt, some time after his accession, suddenly sent down a commission, who placed the imperial seal on everything, and prepared to commence on the following day the labour of inquiry. That night the arsenals were destroyed by fire! But even the consuming element could not destroy

the long-accumulated evidence of fraud. On clearing the ruins, a number of cannon were discovered, which, on reading the inscription on them, were found to belong to a man-of-war which had been lost a short time before in the Gulf of Finland, and as it had been reported, with all her guns and stores on board. It was therefore evident that her own officers had taken her out to sea for the purpose of sinking her, having previously left all the valuable part of her armament and provisioning on shore for sale.

About two years ago, the Russian government caused a steam-frigate, called the *Kamtschatka*, to be built in the United States. The cost was more than double what would have been charged in Scotland or the north of England, at least a third more than would have been demanded in London, including the most careful workmanship in the world. She was built under the superintendence of a Russian officer—one of the best sailors, by the way, in the imperial navy,—the aide-de-camp and principal favourite of Prince Menchicoff, minister of marine. On her arrival, before the setting in of the ice, although too late to give her any trial, enough transpired regarding the vessel to raise strong doubts as to whether she was likely to justify the enormous outlay occasioned by her construction. A committee was appointed—for a committee is a favourite imperial panacea; the author never heard the ultimate conclusion it came to; but in the first stage of the inquiry it transpired, that the live oak, which, according to the stipulations of the contract, ought to have been employed, and which was reported to have been so, in her construction, had, in

some unaccountable manner, been converted into common oak during the frigate's passage across the Atlantic.

As regards the commissariat and ordnance, as well as all other government departments, one might fill volumes with the accounts of their connivance to defraud the crown, no less ludicrous and barefaced than that of a colonel of artillery, who, being charged to superintend the delivery of a certain number of shells and shot cast for government at a private foundry in St. Petersburg, was bribed to place a subordinate at the front door of the yard, who was to keep the tally of the number of barrowfulls wheeled out, whilst they were wheeled in again by the back gate to pass again in review before him.

To complete the brief elementary account the author had proposed giving of the condition of the Russian people, before entering into further detail regarding any particular portion of it, or any description of the empire, there only remains for him to shew and describe two terrible instruments, by means of which the government oppresses the nation; one of which may be considered as an engine of torture for the lower classes, the other, for the nobility—the civil police, and the secret, or as it is called, the “high police,” of which Count Benkendorff, the emperor's chief confidant, is the grand master. Both of these terrible inquisitions inflict, in different ways, an aggregate of misery far greater than those which doomed for religious differences their fellow men to the torture-chamber and the stake. To vary, however, the serious nature of the subject, the author

now proposes taking his reader by the hand, and leading him through the modern capital of the singular empire, of whose social condition he is endeavouring to sketch the salient features.

CHAPTER V.

ST. PETERSBURG AND ITS INHABITANTS.

ST. PETERSBURG, the offspring of the first Peter, is the type of that modern Russia with the existence of which it is coeval—modern Russia, corrupt, polished, and uncivilized, its oriental barbarism glossed over by the varnish of European usages.

It is not yet a hundred and forty years since the first buildings of this imperial city replaced the fishermen's huts on the banks and marshy islets of the Neva, and it is little more than that period since the ground on which it stands was Swedish territory.

No city in Europe is more striking to the beholder than St. Petersburg—few, perhaps, are less imposing. The magnificence of its squares, its buildings, and canals, and the advantageous manner in which its most imposing monuments are grouped together, produce an effect no European city can rival. But then the incongruous medley of the Greek and mixed southern architecture of its remarkable buildings, with the domes and minarets of Muscovite Byzantine churches,

gold, blue, green, silver, and star-bespangled, and the modern and parvenu look of the stuccoed fronts of its gigantic edifices (many of them in a taste worthy the constructors of Buckingham palace, or the national gallery) the very whiteness of the plaster, in an atmosphere as clear and void of smoke as that of Italy—irresistibly remind us that it is a thing of yesterday.

There are none of those historical associations connected with the spot which invest with interest the old moss-grown buildings of the middle ages, and cause us to look with some reverence on the mean old narrow streets and churches of more ancient cities. Neither has architecture or sculpture any of those treasures to offer to our view which in older countries reward our patient research. Vast triumphal gates and arches rise before the beholder, the arms and trophies obviously of stucco, painted bronze; and the gigantic steeds and statues of that metal which surmount them are lamentable in execution. Everywhere the idea seems to have prevailed of raising edifices Egyptian-like and Babylonian, such as the genius of Martin conceived to have stood on the place of now sand-covered ruins. But the idea has only been carried out as far as magnitude is concerned; for instead of bearing the impress of time-defying solidity, which we know to have outlasted the very memory of empires passed away, so characteristic of Egyptian monuments, or the architectural magnificence which modern imagination has transferred to canvas, St. Petersburg, with its gigantic piles, has nothing in its favour but their magnitude; we gaze on them with no more awe than on the miniature Gothic castle of the cockney; and if in St. Petersburg everything reminds

us that it has sprung up like a rapidly developed marsh-plant from the morass on which its pile-sustained foundations rest, so we labour under the painful and irresistible impression that it will be as ephemeral.

This impression it produced, not only on the eloquent and imaginative Marquis de Custine, but on the minute and homely Kohl, and the less matter-of fact Bremner. "The Russian capital," says the latter, "has filled the nations with wonder by its sudden rise; is it to fill them with greater wonder by its yet more sudden fall? Shall the proud monarch of the north hear it said of his darling seat, as it was said to the repining prophet of the gourd, which had made him so exceedingly glad—'It came up in a night, and perished in a night!'" The marquis observes—"The ancients built with indestructible materials, beneath a conservative sky; here, where the climate destroys everything, are raised up palaces of wood, houses of planks, and temples of stucco. It is true the Russian workmen spend their lives in remaking during summer what the winter has undone. Nothing resists the influence of this climate; those edifices which appear the most ancient were reconstructed yesterday, Stone lasts here no longer than the lime and mortar in other climes. * * * These polar solitudes are peopled with statutes and basso-relievos to perpetuate historical events, without remembering that in this country monuments endure even less than the recollections of the past. * * * This city, with quays of granite, is a marvel, but the palace of ice, in which the Empress Elizabeth held a banquet, was no less a wonder, and lasted as long as the snow-flakes—those roses of Siberia."

"The idea," says Kohl, "that this beautiful youthful city, with all its magnificent creations, is doomed to destruction, is really awful." * * * "At any rate, we need not be surprised if told by the newspapers, some morning, that Petersburg, which suddenly rose like a splendid meteor from the marshes of Finland, has disappeared as suddenly, like the *ignis fatuus* which haunts such situations."

Now, if the judgment of travellers ought seldom singly to be relied on,—some wanting the power, others opportunities of discerning—some from an alpine height, when a vale of Chamouni opens before them, looking only to the mule tracks and inequalities of their road—others, whose eye embraces the wide expanse, mistaking, in their enthusiasm, clouds for mountains;—if our own impressions, coloured by our momentary tone of mind, or influenced by vaguely remembered facts, is to be mistrusted, yet when we find them agreeing with those of men so different in ideas, language, and temper, and these men so well agreed among themselves, we may venture to deduce that this appearance of perishability is one of the marked and characteristic expressions of the features of this gigantic city.

It is said that the soil of St. Petersburg is in many parts fathomless bog, and that the piles rather *float* than directly sustain the buildings above them; and it is well known that a prevalence of west winds—such as, if rare, will probably occur once in a century or two—would suffice to raise the waters of the Gulf of Finland high enough to sweep away the devoted city. It will be remembered how nearly this happened in the reign of Alexander.

When St. Petersburg was first founded, and the energetic Peter had wrested the sceptre of spiritual power from a formidable priesthood, every here and there some fanatic of the order rose up in his despair against the man of fate, and howled forth his curses and prophecies against the abomination of the tsar's impious creation, foretelling for it the fate of Babylon, Nineveh, and Gomorrah. Monks and priests in different parts of the Muscovite dominions raised up their voices in prophecy, and died. Whether inspired by their hatred, their bigotry, or the chances which the natural course of events afforded of the realization of their denunciations, these prophecies so strongly seized on the superstitious imagination of the vulgar, as to have been never since eradicated; and from time to time an almost unbroken succession of prophets have continued to foretell the desolation which is to overwhelm the modern capital of the tsars. The inundation of the city in Alexander's reign drowned in the dungeons of the fortress of St. Petersburg several fanatics who had predicted the event. In these dungeons now linger at least two enthusiasts, who fancy that on them has descended the mantle of their unhappy predecessors.

The impression produced by these prognostications is assisted by the perishable aspect of the stupendous buildings which everywhere rise around us, whose stuccoed walls are always peeling and cracking, to the gripe of the keen frost and the blistering sun.

I forget who has called St. Petersburg a vast encampment of lath and plaster, but the comparison is far from an inapt one. Nothing can be more true, as Custine observes in other words, than that man can here never rest from his labour; when he has raised

up a crowd of colossal edifices, he has not only built nothing for future ages, but has hardly done anything for his immediate posterity. Such continuous reparations are necessary, that each generation may almost be calculated to have built the whole city, by instalments of annual repairs. To this the material, no less than the climate and situation, contributes. That chiefly used in St. Petersburg for external embellishment, is in no climate very durable; but the thick, massive walls of brick or stone, which, elsewhere comparatively time-defying, are here mere hollow shells, which the fraud of architects, courtiers, and ministers, has filled with sand and rubbish, although the price of every brick and stone which it has replaced, has been wrung from the blood and sweat of the Russian people.

Nothing can be more obvious than that, in a very few years—in half the time that has elapsed since St. Petersburg arose from the marsh—if this city were not *being perpetually built*, the marsh would again succeed the city; the stucco would be dust; the walls it covers, ruins imbedded in the mud, and the cold spongy moss of this northern climate again creeping over it, with the acid cranberry that alone seems to flourish in its alternate bed of snow and stagnant waters. “Only the St. Isaac’s cathedral, the Alexander column, and the granite quays of the Neva’s bank,” it is said, “would a century hence survive the ruins of St. Petersburg, were it not for the intervention of man’s preserving hand.”

We shall presently see that it is questionable whether the Isaac’s church, mountain as it is of metal, marble, and granite, or even the gigantic monolithe, would be amongst these relics of a city which the flattery of those

who throng the winter palace calls the modern Rome.

St. Petersburg is happily likened to an encampment, because, if on a Russian territory, it is not yet even now in Russia. The country surrounding it is still principally peopled by Finns; the opposite bank of the Neva is Finnish ground; and the frontier of the grand duchy of Finland itself, where all hearts beat with Swedish sympathies, is only about ten miles removed. As the Moslem turns towards the tomb of his prophet, so do the regrets, the reminiscences, and even yet the hopes, of the Finnish people, turn towards Sweden, the body from which they have been recently and violently dissevered.

In Sweden there can scarcely be found man, woman, or child, in whose breast the loss of this barren province does not rankle. Never in the dark ages did the universal enthusiasm of the west pant to recover the holy sepulchre, as the Swedish nation does to regain its lost Finland. Sweden and the Russian empire now stand face to face, like David and Goliath, indeed, but who can tell whether the march of future events and western policy may not put into Sweden's hands the fatal sling. St. Petersburg is not only menaced by the storms which may roll upon her the waves of the Baltic, but also by those, no less fearful, which the policy, the interest, the abhorrence, or all combined, of civilized nations, may raise against the Russian empire, and she stands exposed to bear the full brunt of the first serious attack directed against it. There are, therefore, more reasons than one why a century hence there should be no more traces of the capital of Nicholas, than is to be found in our own day of the royal village of Attila.

To return, however, to our palaces of plaster and stucco. Although we may have a due regard for their advantages and utility, although they are pleasing screens for the dark dirty surface of brick, and applied to the unaspiring habitations of humble privacy, look neatness and economy,—when used in the idle attempt to render vast buildings imposing, and moulded into classic architectural forms, it renders them absurd instead of effective, almost in proportion to their vastness. The few exceptions to this observation in St. Petersburg are only exceptions as far as material is concerned; and if in this respect most striking ones, they only serve to render the want of architectural genius still more remarkable.

Perhaps the only two buildings in St. Petersburg which, independent of their size, have any claims on our attention, are comparatively insignificant ones. We allude to the Academy of Fine Arts, on the right bank of the Neva, and, on the opposite shore, the marble palace, formerly the residence of the Empress Catherine, and in which her favourite Potemkin, to whom she once gave it, scattered his millions with a lavish hand. The latter is also called the palace of Taurida, because faced with red marble brought from that spot. But though creditable taste and material concurred in its construction, it is inconsiderable in size, and is a mere Italian palace—such as rise in whole streets along the canals of fallen Venice.

The two principal exceptions to the ever-recurring plaster and stucco which cover the ill-made brick of which the stupendous buildings of the Russian metropolis are constructed, are indeed in this respect remarkable. One is the largest monolithic column in

the world. The author does not remember the exact height of the whole monument, of which the shaft alone consists of one single piece of polished red granite, eighty-four feet long, and forty-five in circumference, its base and capital of bronze, surmounted by a cross and figure of the same metal; but it struck him as not being far, if at all, inferior in size to the monument raised to the memory of the Duke of York in Waterloo-place.

The Alexander column is looked on with very justifiable pride by the Russians, because it is the most remarkable of the kind in the whole world; neither ancient nor modern times ever saw so large a piece of stone fashioned from the quarry. But then art has done its best to spoil the effect which this work produces. The column is surmounted by a gigantic figure of Hope, holding the cross, and pointing upwards, but in attitude so unfortunate that, seen from two sides, the exceedingly small head of the heavenly handmaid, which is unaccountably poked forward, is hidden by the perpendicular of the cross, and gives the appearance of a headless figure, reminding one irresistibly of the favourite English sign of the "original Good Woman."

"How is it?" was observed to a certain Russian, in whose family, notorious for its wit, it appears hereditary, "How is it that this figure of Hope is without a head?" "Would Hope itself," he replied, "dare to take up its abode beneath the withering glance of a Russian emperor, *si elle n'avoit pas perdu la tête?*"

The very anecdotes connected with this column would fill a volume, and are highly illustrative of the state of things in Russia. A recent traveller relates

that orders were given to procure a piece of granite eighty-four feet long; in place of which the director having found one nearly one hundred, cut off the superfluous length, in literal obedience to his instructions. *Si non e vero e ben trovato*. When the enormous cylindrical block of granite was to be brought from the quarries of Pytterlax, on the coast of Finland, where it was cut, the job was intrusted to the military engineer department; but whilst a commission of generals and colonels were debating on how to set about it, an illiterate peasant, of a class who contract for work to be done by bands of labourers or slaves they hire from their masters, set about the task in his own way, and succeeded in it.

This splendid pillar was found to contain a deep crack, which was hastily filled up with cement, and the whole polished over; but when raised to its present position, a few summers and winters rendered the crack again apparent. That the column was cracked there could be no doubt; that the crack will ever spread in a stone so durable as red granite is another question. But in Russia nothing belonging to the government can be admitted to have even a flaw. The imperial vanity was touched, and a commission of admirals, generals, and counsellors of state, was formed, to proceed to the top of the column by a scaffolding, and verify the existence or non-existence of the alleged flaw, which stared all St. Petersburg in the face. Whether the commission endeavoured to deceive the emperor by reporting as he wished—for it is always an ungracious task to be the bearer of any tidings which disturb the serenity of the spring-head of the state—or whether they had their cue to deceive

the public, is difficult to determine; but they unanimously agreed that "it was an optical delusion, occasioned by the imperfect polish of that part," &c.

We cannot charitably admit that all the members of the unanimous commission were themselves deceived, unless they were more than St. Thomas like; because two of them were previously heard to admit that they had themselves put their fingers into the crevice before the column was raised up at all.

The great cathedral of St. Isaac's, the reproach of many reigns, under which it was successively half built up, half pulled down, and quite neglected, is the pride and boast of the present reign, and is rapidly drawing to its completion. It is an edifice of first-rate magnitude; its walls are fenced with stupendous blocks of gray polished Finnish marble. It has four façades, and the porticoes of each are supported by monolithic pillars of red polished granite, fifty-six feet in height, and nearly eighteen in circumference, besides the smaller ones which surround the drum of the iron dome. The dome itself is gilded over, and surrounded by gigantic statues of bronze angels. One hundred and eighty-eight pillars of Finnish marble are intended to ornament the interior.

If the church of St. Isaac's, though very large, has no pretensions on account of unequalled size—St. Peter's at Rome, St. Paul's in London, St. Maria's in Florence, and St. Sophia's at Constantinople, all exceeding it—yet the splendid materials of which it is built ought to have ranked it amongst the first religious edifices in the world: instead of which it stands a monument of the perverse ingenuity of bad taste, in giving to the most imperishable matter an aspect at once frail, tawdry, and heavy.

The first thing which strikes one on contemplating this edifice is the sombre aspect given to it by the dark colour of the gray marble with which the walls are based, and of the deep red-brown granite of its columns; it is sombre without being solemn, like the time-grayed walls of Gothic buildings; because it is *new*, and will always appear so, on account of the polished surface on the marble and granite. The colour, added to the small-sized windows, and an absence of all relief on the gray, massive, ponderous wall, give it an aspect of peculiar heaviness; but when we lift our eyes above, to the drum and dome, the air of solidity which might somewhat relieve architectural heaviness is utterly destroyed, because this is all constructed of sheet iron, which is painted red and gray, to imitate the colour of the marble and granite below, but without deceiving the most inexperienced eye as to its being stone, but rather indicating its being composed of some material frail and perishable, such as painted wood.

The capitals of all the columns are castings of brass, and produce an effect disagreeable from their sharpness. They are bronze-coloured. The drum is surrounded by similar huge statues of bronze angels—stiff, and without any sculptural merit; and the dome itself, according to the Muscovite taste, is all gilded over. Now perhaps this barbaric taste, if extended a little further, and applied to all the bronze work of the edifice, would have improved its appearance; for without rendering it more gaudy, it would have relieved the darkness of the stone, and at least have given it an aspect of completeness and finish, which is now wanting; for the mixture of bronze and

gilding produces the irresistible impression that the latter is a bright brass coating, about to undergo the operation of bronzing over.

It is said that the soil of the spot on which this cathedral is built is of a nature to render the foundation as frail and perishable as the upper part of it appears to be. It consists of a deep bog, through the hardened crust of which it has been necessary to drive so much timber as forms a sort of raft to uphold the stupendous mass which floats upon it, and as soon as this timber rots away, the mighty building must naturally sink into the deep slough beneath it.

This edifice, was originally begun in marble, and continued by the Emperor Paul in brick. The epigram pasted on its walls, and which may be freely translated as follows,

An emblem in these walls behold,
Both of this reign and of the past ;
This brick—whilst marble was the last —

is well known to have cost an innocent man his tongue, which was cut out by order of the emperor, on his being designated as the author by the police, who were obliged to find a culprit, and unable to discover the real one. The marble reign alluded to, is that of the Empress Catherine.

Although the author is far from being convinced of what is stated about the bog foundation of the St. Isaac's church, there is no doubt of the fact that the massive walls have already cracked and opened, although the cathedral itself is as yet unfinished, or only just completed. But this circumstance, which considerably alarmed the architects at the time, has been attributed to the

injudicious junction of a new with the old brick wall, when one shrinking, but not the other, produced by converse means exactly the effect of pouring boiling water into a thick glass,—where one part of it expands while the other remains stationary; so here, the old wall remained *in statu quo*, whilst the new one shrank; the consequence of which was, the divorce of this ill-assorted union. This version at least will perfectly account for the disseverment of the interior wall, without referring to the fact of any insecurity of the cathedral from its alleged floating foundation.

The glaring errors and discrepancies which this building exhibits must not, however, be attributed to Montferrand, its nominal architect. He has been partly obliged to guide himself by the ideas of his predecessors, and daily, during its construction, to conform to every fancy of authoritative ignorance; so that, for aught we know, everything worthy of praise may be his own, all that is censurable may be attributable to others. But if it proves, perhaps, nothing against him, he has proved nothing in his favour by this stupendous building; for stupendous it is, though about as far inferior in size to St. Paul's as St. Paul's is to St. Peter's. In the grandeur of its aspect, in its harmonious proportions, the smoke-blackened St. Paul's is still more widely superior to St. Isaac's than in its size; and yet the St. Isaac's—perhaps the last church of similar magnitude which will ever be constructed, now that an era so universally utilitarian is opening upon us—was built under circumstances far more favourable than Wren, or Brunelleschi, or any of their brethren, enjoyed. Wren built the dome of St. Paul's a cone of brick, and rounded it with timber. The

vast stone domes of Brunelleschi required the singular hardihood of his own genius. But at the present time, the most unenterprising of the brotherhood know the facilities which the improvement in ironwork has afforded,—rendering works commonplace which before were marvellous, and submitting, as it were, a new element to the plastic hand of the architect. The matter-of-fact and practical Tredgold shews that an iron bridge of a single arch may be made to span the Thames.

The dome of St. Isaac's is indeed of iron; but here is a misapplication of the element of architectural sublimity; it is made to look like painted wood or plaster, instead of being used to accomplish, according to its capability, what no other known material can.

The Muscovite cathedral is not confined or crowded by adjacent buildings; for it fronts a square, or rather, a quadrangle, called, not improperly, the St. Isaac's *plain*, and sometimes the St. Isaac's *steppe*, by the hypercritical Russians, whose true national taste shews as great an abhorrence of an open space, as the old philosophers imagined nature to entertain of a vacuum. On this quadrangle, a hundred thousand troops have been assembled, and it is surrounded by gigantic buildings, the finest in St. Petersburg, besides containing the two most remarkable monuments in the city—the statue of Peter, and the monolithic column, both already mentioned. The senate-house, the war ministry, the government offices, the imperial winter palace, and the admiralty, frown down upon it in all their stuccoed grandeur. One of its issues is through a triumphal arch; three others are up three principal streets of the city, of which one, the Nevsky prospect,

is as wide as Portland-place, and about four miles in length. On each side of the admiralty, it opens, across the noble river, a vista of the opposite quays, buildings, custom-house, rostral columns, and castle.

These rostral columns, which were respectable when raised as trophies in old Rome, and adorned by the prows or beaks of the captured Carthaginian ships, are in themselves inelegant, and become ludicrous when formed of brick and blistering plaster, such as those of the Vasili Ostroff.

The imperial winter palace, whose roof shelters upwards of three thousand, and, according to some accounts, six thousand individuals, is the residence of the emperor. It adjoins the buildings of the Hermitage, a spot notorious in Catherine's private history, now undergoing partial reconstruction, and used as a picture-gallery, and which, being connected with, may be considered to form part and parcel of it. The winter palace, a most ungainly building, is crowded by a row of ponderous figures surmounting its roof; and if there is nothing to admire about it but its plate-glass, it is remarkable as having been, after its destruction by fire, reconstructed and furnished within the twelve-month,—somewhat, as will appear by the sequel, at the expense of its solidity. The uncouth figures by which it is surmounted, as well as the angels surrounding the dome of the cathedral, have so much of the Russian military stiffness and uniformity in their aspect, as quite to justify the expression of the admiring peasants, who call them "*roths*," or companies of angels.

This building was constructed in the reign of the Empress Elizabeth, by the Italian, Rastrelli. Accord-

ing to the old plans, its architecture must have been even less imposing than at present, one order of Greek architecture being crowded on the other, floor by floor. But, perhaps, excepting the Kremlin, no edifice in Russia could boast of the same historical associations ; and hardly the Kremlin, because that is only linked with those barbaric reminiscences of Muscovite history, during which the condition of the Russian people was rather a matter of curiosity than of interest to those more civilized neighbours whose destiny it was, then, never supposed likely to influence.

Whatever may have been the talent of Rastrelli, and however little taste he may have shewn in the construction of the winter palace, it is evident he satisfied that of his employers, for he was rewarded with the title of count, and was commissioned to build the palaces of Strelna and Peterhoff. But he was thus raised on the flow of the imperial favour, to be left only still lower by its ebb ; he died in Italy, disgraced, a poor old man, begging the bitter bread of charity.

The lavish profusion of several reigns had filled these imperial walls with perhaps more of the materials of gorgeous splendour than were contained in any building in the world—velvet and silks, carpets, shawls, gilding, mirrors, amber and lapis-lazuli, marbles, statuary, and pictures—Dawe's celebrated portraits of four hundred Russian generals, whose names the Russians have forgotten, and the rest of Europe could never have learned to remember.

In 1837, this building, which had been erected by the labour of eighty thousand workmen, and what its owners had been upwards of eighty years in adorning,

fell a prey to the flames of a democratic element, which does not respect the homes of princes, and was, in a few hours, reduced to ashes. To form some idea of the extent of ground this edifice covered and covers now, the reader must remember that its inmates at least exceed three thousand, and are reported, as it has been said before, to amount to nearly double that number. It is a quadrangular building, of which each face is somewhere about seven or eight hundred feet in length. The adjoining Hermitage extends along the Neva about seven or eight hundred feet more; thus, with the winter palace, containing within its walls a suite of rooms nearly one-third of an English mile in length.

The Emperor Nicholas, who was witness to the destruction of this palace, determined to reconstruct it in the shortest possible space of time. He himself fixed one year as the period in which it must be re-erected. His architects remonstrated, the emperor insisted, and that day twelvemonth he received his court in a new hall of St. George, in a palace which had been rebuilt and furnished within the prescribed period. The whole empire applauded, and some of his courtiers observed "*that it had taken even God a week to construct the world.*" The chief architects of St. Petersburg had, indeed, observed that "wherever you collect a sufficient number of men together, you may pile up bricks and mortar, and stone and beams, with proportionate rapidity; that a large part of the Chinese wall might possibly have been raised up in a single day, but that as there was a limit to the speed with which cements and mortars dried, and walls and foundations settled, it would very likely tumble

down again—that nearly one-half of the year being a season of hard frost and inclemency, it could not fairly be said that they had a twelvemonth to reconstruct it, and that if they had, they would not undertake the responsibility of the solidity of so large a building, built up in less time than there was any example of in architectural history.”

There was reason in this, but there was the imperial will against it. The very fact of its being what had never been done—a Napoleonic scheme in bricks and mortar—dazzled his imperial majesty, who intrusted its execution to one of his courtiers, a man whose character he began by despising, but who, being a thorough-going tool of despotism, one of those beings who read even the wishes of a master, and spare him the remorse and the dirty work, has rendered himself so useful as to be rising, year by year, in his favour. This man was brought up in the school of Aracheieff.

And who was Aracheieff? we think we hear our reader asking. If the reader had lived in Russia, in the reign of Alexander, he would no more have asked the question than a Frenchman of Louis the Thirteenth's reign who was Richelieu? Like Richelieu, Aracheieff governed both the sovereign and his dominions: like Richelieu, his intentions were good in governing, but in the *modus operandi* he added to the severity of the astute old churchman all the gloomy cruelty of an oriental. He was the projector and the founder of the celebrated military colonies, which would undoubtedly have become dangerous to the peace of the world, or at least have obliged it, in self-defence, to adopt their own system, if they had not

begun by being dangerous to the imperial government. Aracheieff, who ruled the emperor, and through him his people, was himself governed by a mistress, a demon in female shape, who stirred him into a frenzy of cruelty. This woman was, at last, murdered by one of her household slaves, whose sister, her principal favourite, whom she had educated in the most careful manner, and surrounded with luxury and splendour, she caused, in a fit of caprice, to be scourged to death. Aracheieff, after the murder, caused all the domestics of his establishment to be tortured; and as there has been no legal punishment of death in Russia for anything but high treason since the reign of Elizabeth, they were all knouted; those who did not expire under the knout were sent to a distant town, of which the governor was a creature of his own, and sentenced to receive a number of lashes, tenfold greater than any human frame could endure.

After Alexander's death, Nicholas was visiting the hospital of the city in which these victims had been suffering; three or four emaciated wretches, the last survivors, were still in the ward appropriated to those under sentence of corporal punishment. As Aracheieff, the governor's patron, had, on the accession of Nicholas, already received permission to travel, or was, in other words, exiled to Germany, where he died, some one was found bold enough to explain the affair to the emperor.

The courtier to whom we have alluded, as being commissioned to superintend the reconstruction of the winter palace within the brief space of a single year, had been, as already stated, brought up in the school of this Aracheieff. When he had become his most

useful instrument, and been raised to high rank, he has been seen, when his patron gave way to his tempestuous temper, excited by the momentary delay in finding a document required, to wipe the spittle quietly from his face, and only bow at this indignity put upon him, in the presence of an Englishman, many grades his inferior in rank, exclaiming, "Vinavat!" I have erred! To this man there appeared no impossibility before the wish of an emperor; armed with an imperial ukase, he went to work; all the best artisans and labourers in St. Petersburg were forced into the service; fresh relays of six thousand at a time, night and day, succeeded each other. How many were altogether employed, the author never heard, but the mere quantity of quass drank by them, to cool their burning blood, in the oven-like temperature to which the rooms were raised to dry their walls, is something astounding.

The reader must not, however, fall into the error of a Mrs. Malaprop, whom the author once heard observe, on hearing of the immense sums paid for the onions consumed by the builders of the Egyptian pyramids, "If it cost so much for greengrocery, what must their butchers' and fishmongers' bills have been!" The quass formed the largest item of the reward of these workmen; because the government pay in these cases is slow, subject to deductions which no one dares dispute, and because most of those employed have cogent reasons for never claiming it. Large numbers of these men daily fell ill; many died, poisoned by the smell of paint, the heat, and the carbonic acid gas and vapours; but their place was immediately supplied by others. On this subject the author must quote,

because he can add nothing to, the powerful words of the Marquis de Custine. He says—

“ Thus these unfortunate men had to undergo a difference of temperature of from 50 to 60 degrees, on entering and leaving this abode of death, transformed, by means of their sacrifice, into the seat of vanity, magnificence, and pleasure. Labour in the mines of the Ural is less injurious to life, yet the workmen employed at Petersburg were no malefactors. I have been told, that such of these unfortunate people as painted the interior of the apartments that were most heated, were obliged to wear on their heads a kind of glass cap, that they might retain the use of their senses, in the burning temperature to which they were doomed the whole time they were at work. We should be thoroughly disgusted with the arts, the gilding, the luxury, and all the pomp of courts, if such work could not be performed in a more efficacious manner. Nevertheless, the sovereign was called father by all these men sacrificed before his face, for an object of mere imperial vanity. Six thousand workmen were constantly employed. A considerable number died every day, but the place of the victims was instantly supplied by other champions, who filled the chasms, to perish in their turn in that inglorious breach; the dead were unseen;—and the only object of so many sacrifices was to gratify the whim of one man. Among nations naturally—that is to say, anciently—civilized, the lives of men are not exposed but for general interests, and such as almost all the world acknowledges the importance of.”

The order of the emperor at least was fulfilled; he sat triumphantly again on the throne, in the hall in the

palace which the flames had devoured one snort year before. But then began some disagreeables and some dangers. An atrocious odour pervaded some of the apartments; it seemed as if the dead bodies of those who had perished in the work were festering within them. On examination, it was discovered that a quantity of coarse wool, which had been placed between the flooring and ceiling to intercept the dense vapour which the joint heat and damp had given rise to, was rapidly putrifying. Again, the famous hall of St. George was just prepared for some great festal occasion, on which the emperor, the imperial family, and three-fourths of the great officers of the crown were to be united within it, when the ceiling all fell in with a tremendous crash. If its beams and rafters had held a day or two longer, the motion and vibration occasioned by so large a crowd must inevitably have brought it down upon their heads, and avenged on them, as Sampson did upon the Philistines, the sufferings of the poor artisans who had been forced to raise up this monument of a despot's vanity.

It must be understood that if the buildings and monuments which have been mentioned will not bear individual scrutiny and inspection, they are most advantageously grouped together. Beyond the Hermitage, a row of private palaces continues this line of lordly piles up to the palace of Taurida, which borders on the Champ de Mars, a square where the hundred thousand men who have been reviewed on the Isaac's Plain have found room to manoeuvre. The summer gardens skirt one side of it, and on the other are the palaces of the Grand Duke Michel, and the Michel Palace, formerly called the Michaeloff Samok, now

converted into the school of engineers, and divested of its fortifications, though still surrounded by the moat, which the suspicious disposition of Paul caused to be dug around it, but which did not prevent its becoming the scene of his assassination.

The palaces of St. Petersburg, and its environs, though all raised within the memory of the last generation, have another feature of caducity besides their incipient and premature decay. Although they have but brief historical associations to connect with their walls, compared with the remarkable buildings of other cities, yet are they not behind them as the witnesses of tragic deeds, and thus inspire precociously the mysterious interest felt upon the scene of dimly-shadowed crime.

On the other hand, one whose mind is influenced by presages, might be tempted to recognise in the fate of all those who constructed the gigantic piles which surround him, some confirmation of the dark predictions of those who denounced misfortune on all connected with the erection of the city. We have seen the fate of Count Rastrelli. Brenno, the architect of Paul's Michel Palace, whose rampart on the day of his murder was bristling with cannon—Brenno died at Dresden in abject misery. Cameron, the Scotchman who built either the Senate or the Admiralty, and the celebrated Guarenghi, both died poor and in difficulty. Voronikin, who planned and built the church of Our Lady of Kazan, and Dumot, who built the great théâtre, escaped from their misery by seeking voluntarily that death which was slow in coming to their relief.

The Nevsky prospect, the largest of the three prin-

cipal streets which diverge fan-like from the Isaac's Plain, displays the greatest part of the wealth of the capital. The nearer end is at once its Bond-street, Regent-street, and Palais Royal. All the richest shopkeepers display their most fashionable wares, English and Parisian, in the windows. Towards the middle of it, rises the "Gostinnoi Dvor," a vast semi-oriental bazaar, containing some thousand shops, tenanted by the bearded Muscovite merchants. Beyond this the houses dwindle in size, and nothing but the humble-looking shops, in the old Russian style, meet the eye.

This magnificent street contains the Kazan church, which, before the completion of the St. Isaac's, ranked as the first in St. Petersburg. It is boasted to be built according to the design of a Russian architect, Voronikin. No other nation need be anxious to claim him. The church of our Lady of Kazan is a parody on St. Peter's and the Piazza di San Pietro; the mean and the pretentious struggle in its ridiculous aspect. The church is built in the form of a cross. The left wing of this cross forms the principal façade; and this wing is, as it were, intersected by a semi-circular portico, raised several steps from the ground, and supported by a double row of Corinthian columns, which, as they approach the side entrance to which they lead from the Nevsky Prospect, seem crowding on each other in confusion. The interior resembles that of most other Greek churches of which we shall have, further on, to give a general description,—with the exception of the unusual and solid adornment of fifty red polished granite columns, forty feet high, and of a single piece, with capitals and bases of bronze.

When we have long and minutely examined the monuments of St. Petersburg, we are tempted to come to the conclusion that these numerous monolithic pillars, with their brazen settings, are the chief objects worthy of admiration. Two bronze statues adorn the half-moon formed by the semicircular portico; one is that of Barclay de Tolly, the conqueror of Finland, of Scottish descent. It is faint praise to be able to say of him, that he ranked high among Russian generals; for, with the exception of the great Suwarrow, Russia has possessed few who rose above mediocrity.

Besides this Kazan church and the vast bazaar, the Nevsky Prospect contains a Lutheran, a Roman-catholic, and dissenting churches, a mosque, a theatre, and an imperial palace; and each of the private houses being tenanted by from two hundred to two thousand inmates, who occupy sets of apartments as in Paris, it may naturally be supposed that they are prodigious in size.

The great mass of the fine buildings and monuments of St. Petersburg, thus lie grouped together in the most advantageous manner to give the stranger the idea of a city of palaces; the transparent waters of the rapid Neva, a thousand feet wide, flowing between these stupendous edifices, or almost within sight of them.

Three canals, almost as wide as the Seine between its islands, form, through the mainland part of the city, so many arcs within each other. They all look rivers, and each of the main streets diverging from the Isaac's Plain is continued by means of bridges across all of them.

The rest of the city is very different from the gor-

geous specimen which is partially exhibited on the spot to which we have alluded; and although the streets are, for the most part, wide, wherever the wooden houses still remain, with few exceptions, they present an aspect of unredeemed dirt and misery. These are, it is true, gradually diminishing, because, when destroyed by fire, they must be reconstructed of brick, and also because the price of house-rent renders building an advantageous investment for capital. When, however, replaced by brick houses, although these are mostly considerable—often of immense size—when not in the main streets they are inconceivably filthy. The streets themselves are unpaved,—a wooden footboard being raised in the middle, to enable passengers to get through the mud or snow which obstructs them. The doorways and staircases are filthily dirty, all that the scavenger should remove being placed at the chamber-doors or in the yard, and a blast of hot air or steam, impregnated with the odour of oil, fermented cabbage, or other Russian fragrances, puffing at every step into the face of the passer-by. These vast houses are inhabited by innumerable tenants, who, instead of occupying a small house or cottage, locate a room or two of the hundred or many hundred apartments which each house contains.

House-rent is dearer in St. Petersburg than in any city in Europe, and this kind of property brings in a much more certain return than landed estates. Some houses bring in an annual return of five, ten, or fifteen thousand pounds sterling, which the owner is sure to receive in cash; which is by no means the case with landed property. It is common, on this account, to hear a man spoken of as being the possessor of one or

more "stone" (i. e. brick) houses, just as his estates or his funded thousands would be spoken of in England; whereas Russian landed property is considered much in the light that West Indian and Irish estates would be with us. And again, even the land itself is never considered as property of any intrinsic value; the number of serfs and peasants on it, which the owner possesses, being judged as the only criterion of wealth. According to the government in which the property is situated, these slaves produce from ten shillings to two or three pounds annually per head; but revolt, sickness, or famine, often render this return uncertain.

It is obvious that where, in a general way, no agricultural labourers are to be hired at wages which will allow the hirer any remuneration, (every man employing his own serfs to cultivate his own ground,) the soil, without the agriculturists, must be valueless. There are proprietors possessing an extent of territory equal to the whole of England, who do not draw as much from it as others from a thousand acres which are naturally no more fertile, but only better peopled.

Again, from the universal dishonesty and venality inborn in all classes of Russians, there are no means for an extensive proprietor to guard his property from the wholesale depredations of those who administer it. But with the location of a house in St. Petersburg or Moscow, fraud is much more easily prevented; and, on the other hand, until lately, the government granted most encouraging mortgages, to enable speculators to build to an immense extent.

Thus, a brick, or, as it is called, a stone house, is considered as the safest and most tangible investment

and security ; and many a wealthy Russian, travelling abroad, is the proprietor—not of funded property or estates—but of a single lodging-house in St. Petersburg.

The ignoble portion of the town we have described comprises about four-fifths of it, but is redeemed here and there by some stupendous government edifice, which is kept scrupulously clean, and in size seems to have been proportioned to the extent of the overgrown Russian empire. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, every clean-looking and extensive building, which is not a mere lodging-house, is sure to be the property of government.

Interspersed with these are the numerous Muscovite churches, with their mosque-like domes, their minarets adorned with gilding and paint, and scrupulously whitewashed. These churches, in the true old Muscovite style, have about them an air peculiarly national and pleasing ; and, however indifferent in taste, by their picturesquely oriental appearance they inspire a respect which we do not feel for the pretending edifices which parody the architecture of southern and western civilization.

The Neva, which, with its clear arrowy waters, washes the palaces of the imperial city, is a beautiful river. It divides, just where St. Petersburg is situated, into many arms, which embrace the islands that a portion of the city covers. By night, the scene is most striking, when its waters reflect the thousands of lights from the shore, and when, by the blaze which streams from all the windows of the winter palace—and the winter palace is all windows—frigates, corvettes, and yachts, are seen at anchor before the imperial residence.

But this magnificent river, which connects these palaced shores, is only traversed by three miserable bridges of wooden boats, and when the ice breaks up, or the frost sets in, the communication between one-half of the city and the other is often intercepted for several days together.

Considerable difficulties present themselves to oppose the construction of a bridge of stone over the Neva. When the spring thaw takes place, the rapid current brings down complete icebergs, which, if the arches were too near each other, finding no passage, would rise one above the other till a mass accumulated, which might endanger the security of the whole fabric. If, on the other hand, the arches are made far apart, the height to which they must necessarily be raised, would elevate the bridge to an unsightly height above the adjacent banks.

Two winters since, the mighty potentate of Russia was delayed from crossing by the rebellious waters, and it was decreed that a bridge should be built, and a tax was and has been since levied for that purpose. But the foregoing were the difficulties which presented themselves, in addition to the estimated million sterling of cost.

It is true that the modern art of the blacksmith would have obviated the difficulty, by a chain-bridge at one-quarter the cost. There exists in Switzerland a suspension-bridge for foot-passengers, within fifty feet as wide as the Neva. But on this plan the emperor put his veto, declaring that a chain-bridge might be destroyed by one night's labour with the file;—a reason which was applauded as displaying extraordinary acuteness and sagacity, by the committee

appointed to decide on the plans submitted ; although it is evident that, in a chain-bridge, only the links cut through would have to be replaced ; whereas the arch of a stone bridge may be blown up by a boat-load of gunpowder by the evil-disposed, if the determined malice of such is to be anticipated.

In speaking of the want of sculptural taste and talent which the monuments of St. Petersburg exhibit, we must except the famous statue of Peter, and still more pointedly the bronze horses on one of the bridges in the Nevsky Prospect, recently cast by Baron —, the most promising of Russian artists. Each piece represents a naked figure struggling with a fiery steed ; and duplicates on plaster, bronze-coloured, are placed opposite to them.

Equestrian sculpture has progressed, if the art of delineating the human figure, both with the chisel and the pencil, has retrograded. Only a few of the best pieces of Thorwaldsen and Canova equal some of the great antiques, and we do not know that the best pieces of the latter have come down to us. We have no living painters who would rank among the celebrities of that comparatively modern art ; we compare them together, but whom of them do we venture to compare to Guido, Raphael, Rubens, or Murillo ? But with regard to the delineation of the horse, an immense stride has been taken. The exquisite sense of beauty of form and expression, which the ancients entertained with regard to the human figure, were evidently entirely wanting in their appreciation of the noble animal who bears unconsciously so large a share in the triumphs and glories of mankind. The finest steed upon the Trajan column would not be worth

ten pounds if called into life, and the horse-chanter, at a London dealer's, has an eye for the proportions of the animal, which those who fashioned the immortal productions of Grecian art entirely wanted, to judge from the relics they have left us, and from their perfect drawing of the human figure, which shews that they could as easily have represented the horse, had they known or felt what the horse ought to have been like. The formation of the steed of the Greeks and Romans was very peculiar, and some traces of it are perhaps only to be met with now in the Italian breeds. Its characteristics were the very heavy ewe neck, (whereas in our modern breeds the ewe neck is generally light, and the heavy crest curved,) and also somewhat of a stag-like build of body; whereas our modern ideal is more of the greyhound or even hare-like shape. The horse of the ancient Greeks and Romans was as far from beauty as the Egyptian statues, with their heavy negro lips, from human perfection; but, at the same time, it is not unworthy of remark, that the Egyptians seem to have been acquainted with a breed more like the Arabian of later times, if we may judge from their rude and barbarous paintings.

The painters of modern centuries, who were no equestrians, took it for granted that the great masters of antiquity, so perfect in their appreciation of the beauties of the human form, must be equally acquainted with those of the horse, and either blindly followed the ancients, or transferred to their canvass the heavy animals in use in the times and centuries wherein they flourished. Horace Vernet had, therefore an ample field before him, and the disciples of the brush and chisel who have since pictured or modelled the horse,

stood in a position far more favourable than when they have attempted the human figure, because nothing great existed wherewith to contrast their efforts. Half a century ago, nothing in the shape of the noble quadruped existed in any works of art which could be compared even to Wyatt's horse, which bears the statue of George III.

This horse (whether a portrait or not we are not aware) is a light, thoroughbred hack, correctly delineated in form, though there is a stiffness about it which is not life. The horses of Baron — are full of fire and spirit, and the consequent poetry of motion. Both have the merit of being comparatively perfect in anatomy and detail; but the Baron's horses, the reverse of Wyatt's, are faulty in shape; and in the formation of the horse, as in the formation of the human being, the harmony of strength is beauty.

Those practical judges of strength, the sporting men of England, may choose a man disproportionately muscular in certain limbs, as peculiarly applicable for a certain purpose; but if they had to select the form best fitted for every imaginable kind of fatigue and exertion in the same individual, they would unhesitatingly select the Apollo Belvidere, or the still more beautiful Antinous, of the ancients. Still it is evident that if Baron — had known what the form of the steed should be, he would have succeeded in portraying it as well as he has the spirit, which he has so happily seized, and the anatomical detail with which he is so well acquainted.

Whilst on the subject of works of art, we must observe that the taste of the Muscovite in this respect, is as antithetical to that of the Italian, as his cold

climate is to the warm sky of Italy. With the exception of music, for which the Russians have naturally ear and taste, and talent and voice, none of the Muses have smiled on the Barbaric genius of this Sclavonic nation. It is true that wealthy Russians have always been munificent patrons of art, in as far as purchasing its most expensive productions. But although Russia is filled with these, it is lamentable to see the genuine pictures of the great masters, hung unconsciously by the side of daubs and copies unfit for signs, and that by those possessors who have the reputation of being judges. It is common to see paintings unworthy of the back-parlour of an alehouse, even in England, where taste in the fine arts is so exotic, adorning the walls of a Russian magnates' palace, without being an eyesore to any of his visitors.

In fact, the Russian noble, when travelling, purchases statues and pictures, not by his own appreciation of their value, but from their price and from hearsay, and consequently is constantly egregiously deceived. Some years ago, a connoisseur made a collection of the most choice engravings known, besides numerous pictures, which had gradually descended from the lordly halls for which they had been purchased at extravagant prices, to hucksters' stalls, where a few pence were asked for them. The original proprietors, who had collected them all over Europe, dying, their heirs, or those who purchased their furniture, utterly ignorant of their value, cast all those aside which were dirty or tarnished. The purchases made for a few hundred pounds, afterwards realized, in civilized Europe, upwards of a hundred and twenty thousand.

This frequent incongruous mixture of daubs and valuable pictures, may be witnessed even in the most magnificent imperial collection, in the gallery of the Hermitage—one of the four or five finest in the world. Many of the best pictures of the best masters, all the productions of each master being classed together, are mingled with unmistakable copies. At least so it was before the gallery, which is now being re-constructed, was pulled down.

The Muscovites, who have made some figure as copyists, according to the imitative genius of the nation, have made none as original painters in any style. A certain Bruloff, who has launched boldly into the tragedy of painting, the historic school, is considered as by far the best of their painters, and meets with consequent applause and encouragement. To the glory of being the first of Russian painters, he may be well entitled; but his *chef-d'œuvre*, a colossal picture representing the destruction of Pompeii, is plainly a plagiarism from Martin; but it wants the grandeur, the magnificent scenery, and the deep background in which Martin shows the beholder on his canvass what he could never have witnessed in reality—the spectacle of half a million of people. Bruloff's picture is contracted and confused; it does not contain a group or an attitude which does not strike you as having met your eyes elsewhere, but less constrained and stiff. Added to this, the colouring is opaque and heavy.*

* “ A great noise is made in Russia about the talent of Bruloff. His ‘ Last day of Pompeii ’ has, it is said, produced some sensation in Italy. This enormous canvass now constitutes the glory of the Russian school at Petersburg. Don't laugh at this designation.

Perhaps the cleverest of the Muscovite children of the brush or pencil, was the late Orloffsky. His rough sketches of Cossacs, drivers, and in general what comes under the denomination of "*sujets de genre*," command immense prices, and are full of character and spirit. Orloffsky may be, in some measure, compared to our own inimitable Morland, of all our painters, the one most keenly appreciated by foreign taste when known, and yet, singularly enough, known so little. Like Morland, Orloffsky seems to have been a wayward, moody, and uncertain genius, but is very far from equalling the hasty productions in which Morland reflected nature on his canvass, dashing on his colours with a head still throbbing, and a hand still trembling, from the protracted orgies of days and nights.

tion. I saw, when going over the Academy of Painting, a door, on which were inscribed these words—*Ecole Russe!!!* To me the colouring of Bruloff's picture appears false: indeed, the subject chosen by the artist was a fit one for veiling this defect; for who can know what was the colour of the buildings of Pompeii on their last day? The pencil of this artist is dry, his touch hard, but he has force. His conceptions are not deficient in either imagination or originality. His heads have variety and truth. If he but understood the use of the *chiaro-scuro*, he might perhaps some day deserve the reputation which is awarded to him here. At present he is deficient in nature, colouring, lightness, grace, and he has no feeling for the beautiful, though he is not wanting in a sort of wild poetry. At any rate, the general effect of his pictures is disagreeable to the eye: and his style, stiff, but not destitute of force, reminds the spectator of the school of David. It is drawn as if from plaster models, and with much care, and coloured at random. In a picture of the Assumption, which people at Petersburg agree in admiring, because it is by the famous Bruloff, I have remarked clouds so heavy that they might be sent to the opera to serve for rocks."—*Custina's Russia*.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. PETERSBURG AND ITS INHABITANTS.

If the city of St. Petersburg in itself presents nothing except its Muscovite churches, which is characteristic or national, it is different with the aspect of the crowd which throng its streets. The beards, the long hair and the long coats or caftans and sash, of two-thirds of the passers by; the peculiar vehicles and harness; the costume of the Russian coachmen, intermingled with the ordinary dress, appearance, and equipages of other European cities;—all these are striking and novel.

The principal distinction between unpretending plebeianism and aristocratic pretension, of whatever grade of the fourteen classes into which the law divides it, consists in the retention or rejection of the national costume. The bearded and caftaned Russian never holds any rank or *chen*; he is never a holder of slaves; he is subject to corporal punishment at the discretion of a police officer, and he is often a slave himself. He may be a driver, or shopman, or shopkeeper, or a merchant worth his hundred thousand

pounds. He is distinguished from the *moujik* or peasant only by not wearing the sheepskin or coarse brown cloth, but arrays himself instead in the caftan or shube, a robe of blue or green cloth, in winter lined with fur, and distinctive of the *bourgeoisie*. Externally, the wealthy first-guild merchant has nothing to distinguish him from the lowest of his class, except sometimes the value of his furs.

The bearded Russian, whatever the real influence his wealth may give him, (and it may be imagined to be not little, in the most venal country under the sun,) were he to enter any place of fashionable public resort, would be looked upon much in the same light as a private soldier in England, taking his seat in a similar place of entertainment in his regimentals. And there is some foundation for the prejudice which excludes him—namely, his insupportable odour. This odour, no doubt, arises from Muscovite habits. The Russian is very heedless in the change of his clothes, although constantly resorting to the vapour-bath; but in this vapour-bath, which is his greatest luxury, he exposes himself to a heat of steam which, in a certain space of time, would suffice to cook fish, and thus induces a most copious perspiration, which he perpetually keeps up by drinking inconceivable quantities of warm water tinged with tea, and of quass, which is water impregnated with the acid of rye flour, or a little honey. He also eats large quantities of the rank hemp-seed oil, either as a soup, or in his pastry, his buckwheat, or his vegetables, during the fast, which lasts half the year. But the principal bulk of his food is the fermented cabbage, and the sour black bread which is scarcely more nourishing than bran. Some-

thing of the essence of all these things seems to stream through his pores with the perspiration ; or at such events, he smells as if they did.

Now whether the bearded Muscovite be the possessor of millions, or a beggar, this odour never abandons him, because his mode of life is nearly the same only that, in addition to these things, the wealthy drinks porter, champagne, and revel occasionally in every delicacy, though, on ordinary occasions, dipping into the same wooden bowl with their subordinates. The great distinction is the costume and beard : the shaven Russian is always a man of some rank, or wishes to be thought so, and with the shaven chin, always corresponds either a civil or military uniform, or a European habit; but as the absence of the beard, which the moujik glories in, is distinctive of civilization, no vestige of whisker is seen upon the faces of those who eschew the national costume, unless adorning the physiognomy of foreigners. The Emperor Alexander, who had few sympathies with, or prejudices in favour of, his subjects, declared that he knew a Russian of any rank by the smell, and he frequently caused perfumes to be burned when they left his presence.

If we stand in any frequented part of St. Petersburg, and watch the passing crowd of shaven and unshaven Russians, the latter predominating according as it is a more or less fashionable quarter, we observe as great a variety in the appearance of the vehicles which whirl them by, as in those who ride within, constitute the stream of foot-passengers. In the winter season, when St. Petersburg is in its glory, let us take the corner of the Nevsky prospect.

The old body of a chariot placed upon a sleigh

without its wheels, is rapidly whisked past by four rough-looking little horses, wiry and uncouth as the rudest of Welsh ponies, with long ragged tails and manes. Two footmen, in furred greatcoats, with enormous cocked-hats, stand behind the carriage; a coachman, bearded, caftaned, and wearing the quadrangular velvet cap which distinguishes his profession, sits on the box, the reins in both hands, without a whip. One of the leaders is mounted by a boy dressed like the coachman, sitting on a high Tartar saddle, the skirts of his ample caftan being tucked round his legs. This may be a minister, a counsellor of state, or some man high in office, driving to the palace. His dingy equipage shews the negligence to externals of the man in power. His four horses are not worth forty pounds; but these are the hacks which save his fat, sleek, showy nags, of which he has many sets. These horses are harnessed according to the fashion which the Russians have derived from their former Tartar conquerors. The collar is very light, so are the breeching and traces, and all of black oiled leather, which, in dry weather, wears eternally. In the mouth, the horse has nothing but a snaffle.

Next, perhaps, passes a coach on wheels. The coach itself was abandoned some fifteen years ago in Germany, by some fastidious Englishman, who deemed it worn out, and no longer worth repairing; but since then it has been constantly in use, and changing hands, and will probably do service for many years longer, though rather antiquated now. This vehicle is also driven by a Russian bearded coachman; but it is considered to be in the English taste, because a heavy and gaudy old harness, in the English fashion,

fastens the horses to the pole. The horses themselves have a touch of the heavy Mecklenburg breed about them. They are nicked, and retain the smaller imaginable stump of a tail. If there are four horses a heavy postilion, parodying the costume of an English postboy, sits in his saddle like an Austrian dragoon. This is one of the thousand equipages at the disposal of the court, got up in the German department of the imperial stables, and supposed to be in English style or else the property of some German official.

Then dashes by us, at an astounding pace, the bearded coachman shouting as he drives along, a light sledge, of polished walnut or maple wood, scarcely heavier than an arm-chair. The horses are bright bay, or jet-black, glossy in coat, and so sleek and fast that the near horse, as he canters or gallops along, covers the trace with foam; for the near horse gallops always the same shoulder foremost, his neck being rounded, from his head being strapped down, so that his long mane almost trails in the snow. The other horse in reality draws the vehicle. He is harnessed between shafts, and these shafts are held forcibly apart, so as to yield him some support, by a bow about the thickness of a man's wrist, which rises high over his head, above the collar, and to which he is bound by a bearing-rein. This horse trots, while the one beside him canters, and the effect is very graceful, when the galloping horse, or *pristastcha*, is showy; but it is painful to behold, when the curb on the neck, instead of appearing natural in a fierce animal, is evidently torturing some worn-out brute which flounders wearily along, as is so often the case.

In this sledge sits an officer in the guards—a Russian nobleman—enveloped in the light bluish-grey cloak of the Russian army, with a collar of the beautiful fur of the sea-otter muffling up his face, and a white cock-tail feather streaming from his preposterously large cocked-hat. He is a man of family and fortune; his conversation will amuse you for an hour; he appears high bred and gentleman-like;—but converse with him for a thousand hours, and the theme is always the same—champagne, cards, and French actresses. Make your way into his confidence, and learn the nearest wish of his heart, and a hundred to one it is, to get rid of his uniform.

The next is the equipage of a Russian magnate in all its glory. The carriage is bran new, with exceedingly showy arms upon the panels; for although, properly speaking, no Russian family is entitled to quarter arms, since the whole nation was plunged in the profoundest barbarism long after the last epoch when men bore their cognisance upon their shields, yet every Russian glories in having them as a sort of ornament, particularly if adorned with much gilding, and parti-coloured. The footmen behind the carriage are wrapped in magnificent many-caped greatcoats. The capes and the rim of their huge cocked-hats are trimmed with a broad gold or silver lace, checkered with alternate squares, on which the arms of the owner are embroidered. The collar of the footmen's greatcoats, and the trimming of the bearded coachman's caftan and velvet cap, are of sable or sea-otter, and worth, perhaps, a hundred guineas.

The horses, light-limbed, arch-necked, and sleek-coated, show all the useless points of breeding, and

the skilful grooming of their dark, glossy coats, shew off the light and elegant harness, which is relieved by silver ornaments and studs, like the cowrie-shells on the Morisco bridles. But perhaps one of those gorgeous footmen standing behind the carriage, shews his toe of his foot coming through his boot, one of the showy horses wants a shoe, and some part of the brilliant harness is fastened with a piece of rope.

The noble owner is in uniform, although he has paid the onerous tribute of military service; he has just returned from his three years' permission to travel. Like every Russian, whose first principle is to do as Rome as Rome does, when abroad he has echoed the opinions of the liberal society in which he has mingled, and when speaking of despotism, he has spoken with a *connoissance de cause*; but, like most of his countrymen, the liberality of his ideas, or at least of those he professes, has been gradually freezing up as he has approached his native frontier, and he is beset by vague and instinctive terrors, that his words have been picked up by the quick ears of diplomatic spies and their agents, and transmitted home, or that what they have not overheard, may in malice have been attributed to him. He is going thus early, to endeavour to learn from some friend at court how the land lies; but, meanwhile, there is about him the suspicious and fearful air of a hound crouching in his terror, until something is known of how the imperial favour will deign to shine upon him, he is shunned as infected, by all who, when his fears have proved unfounded, a few days hence will be his intimates.

His lady is in delicate health, and ill from the effects of the journey; but if an invitation should

graciously vouchsafed to him, she must quit her sick chamber, and appear, at the risk of fainting under her diamonds, lest the empress should remark, as the Marquis de Custine observes, "That Madame So-and-so is always ill;" thus cutting off his slender hopes of court favour.* Not that the wealthy magnate wants anything of the court; his under-steward cheats him annually out of a larger sum than remunerates the highest office in the empire: but a portion of court favour is a protection against all the thousand annoyances of the machinery of despotic government, and the caprice of autocratic jealousy or prejudice. Perhaps, at this moment, if anything interrupts the anxious thoughts which fill his mind, a feeling of envy flashes across it, as that wealthy bearded merchant darts past him in a light sledge, with a powerful half-bred racing trotter, of the famous Orloff breed, which his coachman, his body half bent forward, and sawing the snaffle-bit to restrain the eager animal, is driving down to the race-course on the ice, the principal place of amusement of his fellows.

The noble sighs as he thinks that the enfranchised peasant has acquired millions of roubles in his trade, which, as a capital employed in speculations, he often gathers together in cash, without exciting suspicion,

* Those who have not the courage or the health requisite for sharing this terrible life, are not in favour. The Empress, speaking of a woman of high distinction, but delicate in constitution, said to me, the other day, "She is always ailing." By the tone and the air with which this sentence was pronounced, I felt that the fate of a family was decided. In a world where people are not satisfied with good intentions, an illness is equivalent to a disgrace.—*Custine's Russia.*

and which he might transmit abroad, and then fly himself: whereas he, the noble, dare not brave the dangers that would attend the attempt to transfer his property abroad, the vigilance of the secret police spies in learning his intentions, or the treachery of his agents or relatives in carrying them out. But the bearded merchant has no wish to leave his country; he speaks no language but the Russ, and if he has become acquainted with the luxuries of civilization, it is only to ingraft them on, not to exchange them with, his barbarous habits. The noble, therefore, looks on him as an imprisoned bird might look on another whose cage was open, but who had no thought of flying away.

Who is it that passes in that dingy vehicle, with the usual long traces, which connect the leaders and wheelers of his equipage, and which almost trail in the mud as it turns the corner? He wears a sort of uniform; he has an air of acuteness; and the spectacles upon his nose appear to have been long worn rather to conceal the expression of those cunning eyes than to assist their vision. This is a judge-general; for, as the fourteen ranks of the Chen class everything by military titles, as president of one of the first courts of justice of the empire, he is addressed as general. The pay of his office, in the expensive and luxurious residence of the court, will not defray his wife's French milliner's bill; he had no fortune, neither had she, he has never inherited any;—and yet he has, since his appointment, purchased estates containing eight thousand slaves, which produce him at least as many pounds sterling of annual rental.

If the severity of the Emperor Nicholas has made

the sale of justice a trade requiring some vigilance, you see it at least a thriving and profitable one.

Let us return to the *koupitz*, or merchant, and his favourite steed, for both are the types of a race which plays a great figure amongst the modern Muscovites.

Ivan Ivanovitch—John the son of John—got permission thirty years ago, from his lord and master, to seek for work, by paying his *abrok*, or yearly tribute. The instinct of traffic is as natural to the Muscovite as to the Hebrew, and he is both a shrewd and a bold speculator. He began as a pedler; then perhaps he kept a *lavka*, or petty shop; from thence speculated in corn, or oil, or hemp, or hides. He has undertaken government contracts, and had the capital and spirit to bribe high enough to obtain them, and then to bribe to evade the fulfilment of them. He has been, or may become, lord mayor of St. Petersburg, or of his native town; but he is seldom ambitious of any honours, which he looks upon as a pretext for fleecing him; unless, indeed, he gets one of the crosses, which dangle by scores about the breasts of the hungry *employés* and officers; for this at once makes him a nobleman, and enables him to purchase slaves. He has probably now attained the summit of his wishes, and realized the ideas of perfect felicity of a Russian of his class—in his estimate of which, the possession of a fat wife, a fat cat, and a fat horse, have a considerable share.

His ordinary mode of life is frugal. He never abandons his fermented cabbage, his buck-wheat gruel, his luscious oil, his fish-pies, and his raw salt-herring and onion; but when he invites any one to his table, every imaginable luxury from every quarter of the

globe is stored upon it. Nevertheless, he scarcely ever concludes a bargain in his business without dropping into a fruit-shop. These fruiterers are at once wine-merchants, grocers, sellers of every variety of indigenous and foreign fruit, cheesemongers, and oil and Italian warehousemen, and make a most tempting display of their goods. Here a certain number of bottles of champagne or London port are drunk, with a luncheon of Caviar or a few oysters. The average price of oysters (which are not found in the brackish waters of the Baltic) is, in St. Petersburg about a shilling a-piece, which raises them infinitely in the estimation of the Russians, who do not object to their being occasionally high-flavoured.

In the warm weather, the great luxury is the water melon, which arrives in great quantities from Southern Russia; and at home, in his profuse moments, the bearded merchant may be seen sitting with one of these cool fruits, into the heart of which he has scooped a hole, serving him as a hat, the juice trickling down and anointing his patriarchal beard.

He drives out, when in a carriage, with four horses because this is a privilege which, as a first-guild merchant, he holds in common with the nobility—and, in fact, the only one. The costume of his wife and daughter is, in common, homely and dowdy; but on great occasions they appear in public in all the magnificence of pink and sky-blue satins, marabou feathers, and expensive furs and diamonds.

With regard to himself, his principal hobby is his horse. For his own sledge he estimates the beauty of the animal by his breadth and fatness; for the race course he is naturally influenced by certain breed

and performance. He seldom drives, and never rides—as, in fact, no Muscovite unmixed with Cossac or Polish blood willingly does; but yet he does not hesitate to give from five hundred to fifteen hundred pounds for a horse—always for what he considers his beauty and his weight, or his speed as a trotter,

So much has been said about the rapid rate of travelling, and the extraordinary powers of endurance of Russian horses, that a stranger is led to expect much, and is consequently disappointed. The national breeds of Russian horses, (if we except the ponies natural to all northern countries,) having been principally derived from the Tartar, they contain far more breeding—i. e., more of the Arab blood, from which all excellence is derived—than the horses of France, Germany, Belgium, or Holland, and are consequently more lasting; but they are bony, angular, ewe-necked, and unsightly; are far from being fast; and want of care, a cold climate, and coarse food, have rendered their appearance still more unsightly.

Wherever an equestrian population has paid more attention to the breed, as in the instance of the Cossacs and Tartars, it has less deteriorated, and is an exceedingly serviceable one. Some reigns back an attempt was made, and has been since continued, to ameliorate it, by crossing it with Arabian and English thoroughbred blood. The result was the production of excellent horses, but which retained the angularity and ungraceful form of the Muscovite horse; in consequence of which, heavy Flemish and Mecklenburg mares were introduced, and crossed with the English barb and Arab. Studs were formed all over the country, and from this stock all the cavalry and carriage-horses

are supplied; but as breeding was not understood, half-breds and half-breds were constantly mingled; so that only the useless and showy points of blood are conspicuous.

The Orloff breed—the most renowned in Russia, especially the Orloff trotters—spring from the same origin. They are very large in size, and from the age of one year, are harnessed to light sledges, and never allowed to break trot; so that an Orloff trotter has, perhaps, never galloped nor cantered since he was foaled, and thus, having lost all instinct of the pace, if a wolf were at his heels, would still *trot* away from it. When put to their utmost speed, these horses therefore trot at an astonishing pace. But the race which generally takes place on the race-course on the frozen Neva, opposite the palace, is seldom more than a verst, or two-thirds of a mile, in length; more frequently only half that distance. They cannot therefore be compared with English or American trotters. No doubt that these latter cannot attain an equal speed for short distances; though even for five miles the Orloff horses would stand no chance—firstly, from inherent want of blood, and secondly, from want of condition, being always as fat as the horses in the life-guard barracks.

On the other hand, of all the continental nations of Europe, the best thorough-bred horses are now bred in Russia, in the vicinity of Moscow. Of course they are by good English thorough-bred stallions, out of mares of the same blood: and the result has been attained by the employment of English trainers, grooms, and jockeys. A Mr. P—, in particular, has been very successful, and his horses having been tried

against thorough-breds of an inferior stamp, purchased at immense prices for the imperial family, and imported from England, may probably be, in two or three instances, estimated as having attained to the value of from a hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds, for our own turf, and capable of winning many petty stakes.

Four or five years ago, no foreign country could boast of as much. The society of Verviers, in Belgium, perhaps came nearest, and by employing means almost similar. The object in breeding racers is, however, in Russia, by the few who have attempted it, solely to win the prizes awarded by the crown to native-born horses. The Russians never bet upon the event of the race (unless it be a trotting race) beyond a few pounds, although they will gamble away fortunes at cards. The man who refuses to back for five and twenty pounds the colt he has watched and reared, and imagines to be the best in the world, will sit down and play *ecarté* all night long, at fifty pounds a game.

Again: the Russian, the true Muscovite, at best not prone to the saddle, does not trust himself to ride the thorough-breds he rears; so that it is, on the whole, questionable whether these first successful steps in the only right road to secure a superior breed of horses—viz., by the introduction of a taste for racing,—will not eventually stop short.

With regard to the powers of endurance of the Cossac horse, extraordinary tales are told, as in all countries where no heavy wagers test the marvels related. The stories of wonderful performances are so constantly and so well authenticated, that one could

hardly have doubted their immense superiority over our own horses, had not the matter been set at rest by a remarkable trial, towards the close of the late emperor's reign.

A wager was laid by Mr. Gibson, the English consul, that two English horses would beat any two Cossac horses which could be selected, at a race of fifty versts, or upwards of thirty-three English miles. This took place long after the Cossac horses had been improved by the admixture of English and Arabian blood, and Mr. G. had no particular horses in view in making the match. He commissioned a friend to send two hunters for the purpose. Two tolerably well-bred, but at that date naturally not thoroughbred hunters, were sent out to him; whilst the Russians selected out of some fifty thousand of the best horses in the Cossac country. The race took place in the presence of the Emperor Alexander; regiments of Cossacs were dispersed along the line to keep it clear, thousands of pounds were betted on the issue of the match, and an immense concourse of people assembled to witness it.

It commenced under these disadvantages for the Englishman: firstly, they had grown men to ride, whilst the Cossac horses were ridden at feather weight; and, secondly, one of the two English horses fell dead lame at starting. The other, at the half-way station, arrived whilst the two Cossacs were far out of sight, and its rider being full of contempt for his antagonists, he dismounted, both to refresh himself and his steed; meanwhile the Cossacs came up and passed onwards.

Now it happened that the commander of the Cossac

horsemen stationed to keep the line, was deeply interested in the issue of the race, and by a very ingenious, if not very creditable, piece of jockeyship, he had contrived to be made acquainted at every instant with its progress. For this purpose the Cossacs had private orders, whenever the Russians were a-head, to hold their lances perpendicular, when the English were foremost, to drop them horizontally. As the horsemen were in sight of each other, this signal was in a few minutes telegraphed from one to the other, up to the count. At about the middle of the race, where the English horse had stopped, the lances, after being constantly down, were suddenly raised up, and Orloff, imagining that now the bottom of the Cossacs was beginning to tell, made sure of victory, and betted another hundred thousand roubles on the event. But he was caught in his own trap—the lances went up again—the English horse come in at last, in miserable plight, it is true, but the Cossac horses never came in at all, either dying or being obliged to be killed where they had fallen.

With regard to the fast travelling in Russia, because the horses are always galloping with a short stride, and kicking up the snow, which generally forms an admirable railroad, and because six or eight are harnessed to a sledge or carriage, foreigners are apt to imagine that they go very fast. But it is probable that even by dint of bribery, exhortations, and the distress of his master's horses, to which the driver may be allured, no private individual accomplishes an average of fifteen versts an hour, which is ten miles, and eleven versts is much more common. The emperor, indeed, travels fast, but then horses constantly drop dead in

the harness, and those which do not will never again perform a similar feat.

Next to the emperor, the *feld juegers*, or couriers, manage to obtain the greatest velocity ; you may see one dashing round the corner just after the bearded merchant. A common sledge, or light cart, or *talega*, is dragged along at the gallop of three ragged-looking post-horses, harnessed abreast, and constituting the *troika*. They are driven by a peasant, the *feld jaeger* himself, in an uniform not easily distinguishable from that of a field officer—a grey cloak with furred collar, and a cocked hat with streaming white cock's feathers. He has, perhaps, just arrived from a journey of a couple of thousand miles, in charge of despatches, without halting for half an hour on the road, and he is certainly a most extraordinary personage, because meet him when and where you will, he looks as smart and as spruce as if prepared for parade, and you see him whirl along through the dirt or snow, sitting upright in a seat without even a back to it. He keeps himself warm by exercising his whip on the backs of post-boys and post-masters, and receives a salary of about sixty pounds for going a distance equal to the circumference of the earth in a season. But then, although he is allowed money for post-horses, no post-master dares take it, because he would revenge himself by driving the whole team to death ; consequently his perquisites become very lucrative.

Let us turn next to that dashing family-sledge, with its cloth of pale blue, lined and edged with black bearskin, to match the liveries of the coachman and postilion, whose caftans and velvet-caps are of the same azure hue, trimmed with silver lace and some kind of pale fur. The four black, glossy horses are

harnessed, leaders to wheelers as usual, with traces twice the length of each horse, kept separate by a cross-bar, which occasionally trails in the snow. Two footmen are on the foot-board, the broad silver lace on their coats and cocked-hats embroidered with the owner's arms. The slave-coachman is a portly and handsome-looking personage, but especially distinguished by a black, silky, bushy beard, as ebon in hue as any Turkish pasha ever dyes his hairy ornament. The beauty and the beard of the coachman are considered essential to the perfection of the Russian equipage. This one was won at *écarté* by his present mistress from another lady a few nights ago, or exchanged for a Cashmere shawl.

The noble proprietress of this equipage reclines, with her daughters, listlessly in the sledge. There is a pallid languor about all these, which gives them an exotic appearance, if we may be allowed the expression, which no doubt arises from their being confined so large a portion of the year at an African temperature. If not intermingled with Georgian, Polish, or Livonian families, they are sure not to be beautiful, though never vulgar in appearance; but you must never look into their mouths, particularly after the contrast which the ivory teeth of the grinning coachman present, thrown in relief by his dark beard. The costume of these ladies is always the last Parisian fashion, except that they use the most expensive materials, and prefer the most delicate colours. Some pale tinted satin covers their cloaks, lined through with furs of inestimable value, of which the handsomest part is shewn at the collar. The cloak is worth, perhaps, ten thousand roubles.

Whilst speaking of furs we cannot but observe how little they are generally understood in England. Our fair countrywomen are really seen to wear rubbish, which a Russian lady's maid would disdain. And this is not because, as is commonly imagined, furs are cheap and abundant in Russia. On the contrary, strange as it may appear, the great mass of furs used in Russia comes from London, and every fur is worth fifty or a hundred per cent. more there than in England. Even the famous Siberian sable is not Siberian; it comes from the Kurile islands in the Pacific, whither the Russian government every other year despatch a vessel or two, which complete the circuit of the world, and return laden with the productions of this distant possession.

In London, one constantly sees well-dressed women with imitation sables, although the real skin does not cost above twelve shillings, the darkest-coloured from twenty to thirty; but the sable of the Kurile islands may run as high as six guineas a single skin, and is seldom under four in price; whilst in the beauty of its long, thick, light-feeling, and dark-coloured hair, there is more difference than in the price. This is the sable used by the Russian dames. But in addition to this, two furs are generally worn in Russia, which are almost unknown in England—the most valuable of all furs—the sea-otter and the black fox. The former is used for officers' cloak-collars, and this narrow strip cannot be obtained under ten pounds, in its most inferior qualities. The black fox is used for ladies' cloaks and muffs; a single collar of it is worth at least sixty guineas.

The countess or the princess and her daughter con-

verse only in French. Their sledge is now full of the last novels by Sand, Paul de Kock, Eugene Sue, and Soulié.

As is woman everywhere, the Russian women are more generous and less selfish in disposition than the men, and consequently less servile. They condemn all that is Russian, and idolize what is foreign—especially what is French. If you could read the secret wishes of those pale girls, what do you think they would be? You may feel disposed to believe that at least their thoughts turn on matrimony: but not at all; it is ten to one if they are not longing or plotting or scheming some plan to get abroad, and take wing away from that vast prison-house, the Russian empire. In this feeling their noble mother fully sympathizes with them, and whilst waiting, albeit in vain, in the hope of realizing their dreams, they will go home and repose their full confidence in the French tutor and the Swiss governess.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET POLICE.

IN Russia, for several reigns past, there has existed a secret police. The Emperor Alexander, indeed, for one moment, suppressed it, but was speedily forced to re-establish it, by the dangers menacing his authority, and even his life,—of which the reader will find a detailed account in a subsequent chapter.

At first sight, the apparent necessity of continuing this terrible institution appears a palliation, or even almost a justification, of its existence; but on reflection, we shall find that the restraints it imposed on a large portion of Muscovite society resembled those bonds which tie down a being writhing in pain; it was folly to remove the bonds without removing the maddening cause of torture. Conspiring associations sprung up on every side, amongst the nobility, like mushrooms, as soon as the secret police was partially abolished, and they took even so deep a root as to endure long after its re-establishment; but they sprang up, because with the secret police a means of repressing and discovering the machinations of the op-

pressed was for a time abolished, whilst the oppression under which they laboured continued to endure.

A secret police exists even in many constitutional, and in most despotically governed countries. In Prussia and in Austria it is a very formidable instrument of oppression; but in Prussia it is tempered by the fears and by the very ambition of government, whose policy it is to render itself popular at any sacrifice short of its absolute power, to the neighbouring Germans, and in its own heterogeneous dominions. In Austria the aristocracy has still practically some rights, privileges, and power, which partially check this famous engine of despotism. But in the Russian empire, which, more than a despotism, is essentially an autocracy, this political and social inquisition is unlimited, unbounded, and unmerciful in the exercise of its authority. The reader may call to mind those fearful accounts which appear, in the course of centuries, almost to have exuded, like their subterranean dew, through the dungeon walls in which the state of Venice, the Wehmeor Gericht, and the Spanish inquisition, confined and tortured prisoners, whose disappearance alone was known, though no one dared to comment on it; their crime and their punishment alike remaining in all the mystery of the grave, excepting in those few rare instances which inspired the human mind with its proverbial horror, both of the apparent omniscience and the relentless cruelty of these terrible institutions.

Let the reader picture to himself all that he has read, which has been authenticated, and all that his imagination has probably pictured, concerning these, applying it to the secret police of the Russian empire,

and he will still remain behind the reality in estimating its dark, mysterious power, its universal penetration into what appeared impenetrable privacy, and in the terror it inspires. Every man in the empire, from Field Marshal Paskevitch, Prince of Warsaw, (until recently the only man of the first of the fourteen classes,) down to the humblest individual above the condition of the serf, feels or fears that its all-seeing eye is watching his conduct, and often viewing it with vision distorted by private malignity, revenge, or envy. From what he has heard, from what he has learned and seen, the Russian doubts those nearest and dearest to him: the friend feels occasionally the suspicion flash across his mind that the friendship of long years may prove only a cloak to this fearful *espionnage* which the secret police entertains in all classes of society; the brother sometimes dreads to confide to the brother thoughts which may be registered against him, and meet at some future period with a retribution, sure, if slow; the very bridegroom often questions whether the bride does not open to him her arms to worm from him some secret which may be supposed to exist.

The author must again beg of his reader not to judge him to be carried away by the enthusiasm which may naturally be excited by dwelling on such a subject, into metaphorical exaggeration. He not only bore actual cases in his mind's eye in writing the above, but could even instance a father betraying his own son to the secret police, the unnatural treachery of the father proving no mitigation of the son's punishment, although personally rewarded by the imperial gratitude, and publicly cited for the sublimity of his devotion and virtue.

Long-rooted and irresponsible power appears apt to establish a strange code of political morality for itself: the preceding allusion reminds the author that of two or three titles bestowed during many reigns, commemorative of the services they were intended to reward—besides that of Zabalkansky, crosser of the Balkan, conferred on Diebitch, of Erivansky, or conqueror of Erivan, on Paskevitch—stands that of Vernoi, or Faithful, tacked, he is sorry to add, to an English name, and earned by the betrayal of a conspiracy.

The author must hasten to remove an impression which might otherwise be received, that the cases instanced prove any laxity in the ties of natural affection. This would be most unjust to all classes of the Russians; for, on the contrary, it is a bright and redeeming trait of their character that nowhere are there better sons, mothers, and fathers. Russian parents, indeed, might often be held up as in some respects models to the world. It is seldom one sees them enjoying wealth which they do not share with their children. There are no men who, with an immense income, see their own flesh and blood pass through all the green years during which life holds out its chief enjoyments, looking in vain through the barred portals, which may be only opened when too late to enter them—men, and even women, as one sees in England, who live on—to a century, if they can—wallowing in luxury, and allowing their children to grow gray-haired in comparative privation. It is customary amongst the Russians always to make a large and early provision for their descendants, with the reasonable view of assuring them as many years of happiness as it may be in the power of

parental affection to accomplish. It is by no means unfrequent to see a couple equally dividing their property with their children, and giving it to them on the establishment of each son and the marriage of each daughter.

When, therefore, such evil results are produced, it is in the moral effect of the secret police, and the manner in which it is calculated to work on the fears, the weaknesses, and the vices,—not in any inherent heartlessness of character,—that we must seek their causes.

In proceeding to examine it, the reader must not expect any full and complete account of an institution which is of its very nature secret, and of which only a very small portion is ostensible. Yet even this ostensible portion, though a mere fraction, a branch, as it were, of the whole establishment, is in itself immense.

Under the name of the Haute Police, Count Benkendorff,* a Livonian nobleman, holds in his hands all the threads of this vast complicated machine. In him the Emperor Nicholas reposes unlimited confidence, and probably in him alone, although alternately, according to his mood, more subject to the influence of other favourites—such as the General Klein Michel, the unflinching tool, the instinctive reader of imperial wishes almost before they have gathered into thoughts; Prince Menchicoff, who flatters the imperial aspirations after maritime power: or, at times, the versa-

* Count Benkendorff is since dead, and Count Orloff has succeeded him in this office, the power of which is now in some measure transferred to Perowski, minister of the interior, who only last year was guilty of wholesale barbarities in the capital.

tile Prince Tchernicheff, now the antiquated dandy, but once alternately the acute diplomatist, the star of Parisian drawing-rooms, the partisan leader, and the successful general; or else—as their respective fortune may be in the ascendant—Paskevitch Erivansky, Prince of Warsaw, who has been raised, for want of a better, into “a great captain,” because the splendour of his master’s reign would be incomplete without one.

Count Benkendorff* appears to have dated his rise in the emperor’s favour chiefly from the services he rendered him on the eventful 26th of January, 1825, by securing the artillery. He is said to be, like his master, a lover of justice, when it does not interfere with state policy or imperial interests; but, unfortunately, almost every case referred to the decision of either involves one of these qualifying contingencies. He is not a mercenary man, or, at least, he neglects his own fortune, as far as it is pecuniarily concerned; although, of course, the favour of a master whose terrestrial omnipotence within his own dominions can make or unmake fortunes with the mere dash of a pen, may be as well worth storing up as it may be to accumulate estates and slaves of which the possession might prove equally transitory, and is perhaps a surer way of eventually attaining and more pacifically enjoying them. But even if he have taken this view of the question, it is some praise to state the fact regarding his character; and it is more, to be able to say, that if the secret police must exist at all, since there must be a grand master to it, there are few whom the

* Benkendorf fell into some disgrace with the Emperor previous to his death.

Russians would see step into this place, many whom they would dread to see invested with this office as an addition to the misfortune of its existence.

The "high police," of which this man is grand master, is ostensibly established for the detection of all machinations against the state and the emperor—which, as in the idea of Louis the Fourteenth, are in Russia identified; for the detection of abuses in the administration of government, and in all those instances which no code of laws can reach; to punish vice and crime, and to protect innocence and virtue, by its discretionary power. Its attributes are therefore as thoroughly based in the interests of humanity and benevolence as the intentions which Robespierre poured forth in honied accents to the admiring ears of his mountain followers.

The very direction of this institution, as the Emperor Nicholas has organized it, unreservedly delegates to Count Benkendorff his absolute authority over all his subjects, amongst whom we must remember that even the imperial family is included. Every man in the empire is bound without question to obey the order of this vizier, as if it emanated from the imperial mouth—the mouth which makes laws as binding for sixty millions of subjects as if a nation had deliberately planned and pledged itself to obey them. If a sub-delegate of this grand-master, distinguished by the livery of the secret police, present himself in the dead of night before a frontier fortress, before the palace of an imperial prince, or the dwelling of the first magnate of the land, he must have instant admission to the governor, the prince, or the noble—admission even to the bed of death and delirium, or into the

nuptial chamber. He may drag any individual into a talega or kibitka, without assigning any reason, without intimating why he is taken, whither he is going, or when he will return. Family, servants, and friends, must all keep a discreet silence on the event, and never even dare to ask, excepting after long groping their way through some influential channel, if ever, and when, he is to be restored to them.

When the individual so treated returns—if ever he returns—he has been “in the country,” he has been “absent on business,” frequently he is himself ignorant of the cause of his abduction; but he seldom confides what happened in the course of it, even to the ear of most confidential intimacy.

There is a lady still living, who was stepping out of her carriage in her ball dress, when she was quietly handed into a sledge—her destination was Siberia. When the long journey was accomplished, she was located—she knew not in what region or government—in a hut, containing two rooms, each divided from the other, and leading into two separate yards, each a few paces square, and surrounded by a high wall, which only admitted the light of heaven. A sentinel was mounting guard outside the walls; her coarse food was brought by a silent jailor, and here she remained for two years. At the expiration of this term, the door of the yard was one day opened, and a prisoner was thrust in to her, who turned out to be a Polish nobleman, who had been long confined in the adjoining cell, but was now removed to make room for another. In this room, or den, she lived with her unfortunate companion, for twelve years more, ignorant alike of the spot of earth she was inhabiting,

and of the cause of her being banished thither. On morning, her door was thrown open, and a voice called for number so-and-so, by which, in the rare intervals of months and even years elapsing between the occasions on which her jailors answered her or spoke to her, they had been accustomed to address her. She stepped forward; the door was closed, without her even having time to take leave of her companion, whom she never saw again; she was hurried into a sledge; she retraced the journey of many months, and one night found herself in the office of the grand-master of police; a little cupboard was thrown open, and she was presented with the identical ball-dress which had been taken from her on the night of her exile; the jewels indeed were gone, but there was not a bow, a flower, or a piece of lace of it blackened and faded frippery wanting; even the withered nosegay and the fan, in which a long generation of spiders or brown beetles had nestled, were carefully restored to her. She was thenceforward at liberty.

This lady never knew the cause of her punishment or of its cessation. "And did you never make the inquiry?" "What, be so long in Siberia, and not yet have learned discretion!" "And what was said on your re-appearance in society?" Nothing; those who had known me formerly made no comment; to those who inquired, Who is Madame ——? where is she from? where has she always lived? it was simply answered, '*Madame —— demeure depuis beaucoup d'années sur ses terres*'—She has long been buried amidst her estates."

It is four or five years since some indiscretion was

committed by an individual who had some interest with those in authority, by narrating certain passages connected with the history of the secret associations concerning which the reader will hereafter find some copious details; in a word, he let his tongue run too freely on this dangerous topic. One morning, an officer of gendarmerie presented himself in his drawing-room, and, with the greatest urbanity, desired him to follow him to the chancery of Count Benken-dorff. When the pale-blue uniform of the officers or privates of this corps, who are the avowed and ostensible sbirri of the secret police, is once seen crossing the threshold, a visit from the angel of death alighting there could cause no greater consternation. He obeyed, as every one must do in such a case, and leaving his family a prey to their terrors, he stepped into a sledge with his dreaded visitant. He did not return that day, nor the next, nor the day following; his relatives were meanwhile assured that he was safe, that he had powerful friends and protectors, and that he would soon be restored to them.

Thus six months of anxiety passed away; towards the middle of the seventh, the officer again made his appearance, but in such guise as to be hardly recognised by those nearest and dearest to him; his ruddy cheeks were livid, his rotund body was wasted into angularity, the merry sparkle of his eye was gone, and its brightness quenched for ever in his terror. He did not complain of his treatment; on the contrary, it had just been proved to him that it was monitory and friendly. Nevertheless, it had reduced him to this condition. He narrated as follows:—

Shortly after leaving his home, he was placed in a

dark apartment. At nightfall, he was ironed and placed in a sort of box upon a sleigh, such as is occasionally used in winter to transport prisoners ; grating at the top let in the faint light reflected from the snow, but allowed no view of the scenery through which the speed of horses was hurrying him the whole night through. An hour or two before daybreak, the vehicle stopped ; he was blindfolded and led into a fresh resting-place. Through the whole of the next night he was carried along in a similar manner, arriving to sleep in a dark dungeon, and being again hurried forward on a road which his fears told him, beyond the consolations of hope, to be that of Siberia.

Thus, night after night, and day after day, elapsed the former in speeding towards the fearful solitude the latter in reposing as well as he could from the fatigues of his arduous journey. The dark nights became moonlight ; the moon waned again ; and again the night became moonlight ; and he was still forced to hasten on uninterruptedly, without having seen one furlong of the way. The faint light of the moonless winter's night, piercing through the narrow aperture which afforded air to his vehicle, now enabled him to distinguish the objects it contained, so well had his eyes become accustomed to the utter darkness in which he was kept during the day.

Like all people, too, deprived of vision, after many weeks he learned to substitute for it a sense which the eye-sight often leaves comparatively dormant—that of discerning things by touch and feeling. He had no opportunity of making any observations on the road he was travelling ; but the interior of his cage he knew plank by plank, nail by nail, and it might almost be

said straw by straw. He therefore, in the darkness of every day, endeavoured to make acquaintance with every fresh dungeon in which he found a night's abode. He was struck with the utter monotony and sameness of these places of relay; he had seen, as all Russians have, the battalions of the imperial guard, where one man, to the very setting of a cross-belt, to the colour of his hair, the shape of his moustache, and to the very expression of his countenance, as nearly resembles another as two peas in one shell; but he was struck, after travelling some thousand versts or two, to find one dungeon resembling another so closely that every brick and stone was disposed precisely like another.

At last on one occasion, he left a piece of the hard brown crust of his rye bread, marked in a peculiar manner with his teeth. To his utter surprise at the end of his night's journey, he found a crust perfectly similar, in the dungeon in which he was lodged. He now began to doubt his own senses; sometimes he fancied he was insane; sometimes he conceived the unutterably fearful idea that he was somehow doomed to a dark and unrelieved monotony, which was to extend to the merest trifles, and that this was a means of moral torture, of which, as he approached Siberia, he was experiencing a foretaste.

It is strange to say, that with these causes of suspicion, it was not till many weeks after that the thought flashed across his mind—a thought which he discarded as an illusion, but which at last came breaking in upon him like a ray of light,—that he had never moved from the same environs, and had returned to sleep every night in the same spot. Such

in fact proved to be the case: night after night, for months, he had been hurried along the same road, to return to the same cell. It must be remembered that this was not a punishment, but only a friendly warning, to deter a man in whom some one in power felt an interest, from incurring it!

It has been stated that the ostensible force constituting the high police, comparatively small, is in itself formidable. In fact, in the chief town of every government (the Russian empire being, as is well known, divided into governments, instead of counties, departments, or provinces,) there is a branch establishment of this institution, with a regular complement of avowed officers, beside a corps of mounted gendarmery which may be considered as more especially its executive, although the whole force of the empire may naturally be called in, should they prove inefficient. Some thousands of avowed officers, and agents, and brigades of this armed force, are thus exclusively devoted to this service, under the grand master's orders; but its secret agents, correspondents, and spies, direct and indirect, are supposed to outnumber many scores of times those who wear its livery.

The expense of this establishment is avowedly enormous, but there is every reason to suppose its outlay to be far greater than is even admitted; and moreover, it is one which has been year by year increasing. To further its objects, it is not only necessary to entertain spies in all classes of society, at home and abroad; it is not only that there must not be a man in the empire above the rank of a serf, on whose conduct and antecedents, at a moment's warning, ample details must not be in readiness, if required by it.

superior authorities—which naturally necessitates armies of spies, and armies of clerks, to compare and compile their reports;—but also there are those to be bribed, especially beyond the pale of the empire, whose exorbitant demands, though comparatively few, still vastly swell its budget of expenses.

The passport-office is comprised in the institution of the high police; and through its intermedium every individual above the peasantry is registered. Annexed to the duplicate of his registry, is a compilation of all the reports, collected by all the spies who have come across him during his life, with their original observations, notes, and denunciations, all arranged with such admirable order and regularity, that in St. Petersburg and Moscow, within a few hours, the superintendent of police can become acquainted with the most secret actions of his life, together with the opinions he is supposed to entertain, or, at least, the sentiments he has avowed. There is thus many an individual who imagines himself utterly beneath the notice of government, to whose name, in its black registry, are appended whole manuscript volumes upon volumes of secret information. Cordial acquaintances, dear friends, servants and slaves, and too often relatives, have consciously or unconsciously contributed to swell the mass.

It is to be observed that as the reports of spies are naturally compared and subjected to additional scrutiny where widely dissimilar, these men as seldom utterly deviate from the truth, or build up their accusations, without a shadow of foundation, as they ever tell the plain, unvarnished, and uninfluenced truth. Thus somewhat of truth is always mixed up with

calumnies and colorings of facts which utterly distort them, and all stand arrayed against the subject of them in black and white, to be raked up should he ever, innocently or culpably, give umbrage to the secret police, or incur the serious displeasure of any of its innumerable agents.

"Man forgets and God forgives," whispered a Russian, "but the secret police neither forgets nor forgives." The frivolous conversation which took place years ago, at the dinner-table, over the punch-bowl, or in a moment of vexation or anger, all is noted, with the malicious comments of those who reported it. All are thrown into the balance when his fate is weighed, unknown evidence thus influencing the decision by unknown judges, of the destiny of a man who has perhaps, in reality, never offended even against the peculiar code of political and social morality which is the standard of this fearful institution. When the Russian subject has been found wanting in this balance, his disgrace overtakes him as suddenly and unaccountably as the doom of fate, and he may often waste the remaining years of his dreary existence in vain attempts to guess the cause of his punishment, his friends and relatives in conjecturing the nature of it. The grave is not more incommunicative as to what passes in the unknown regions beyond its bourne, than the secret police. It is true the enmity of private individuals, the anger or the vindictive spirit of princes, may die before them, or die with them; changes of party, and the weft and woof of fresh intrigues, may render meritorious what a few years before was odious in the eyes of those who have been replaced or superseded; but all these eventualities seldom bring relief to those who suffer.

Scarcely is the great maxim of the high police, and its Machiavelian spirit finds it better that these individuals should die in the mines, the dungeons, and the deserts, in which they have already wasted so many years, than that the scandal of their return should be given to society. Already, with every precaution, too much truth, too many details, escape to the world, notwithstanding the atmosphere of mist and silence with which Muscovite society is enveloped and pervaded. There is another thing; if all men are too apt to forget the unfortunate, fear and policy in Russia enjoin the most rapid oblivion of those whom the government has made so. Like the famous Iron Mask, the names of prisoners and exiles are always unknown to their jailors or guards; they become *numbers*. There is no chance of their ever being acquainted with any political change, if such occurred, and that they could ever know that it might affect them; for when the wailing and gnashing of teeth during years has subsided into gloomy despair or quiet idiocy, there is no reason why they should at that precise moment employ any unusual efforts to make themselves heard.

On the other hand, when an individual is thus provided for by the state, the business of the recording demon ceases; it is the last page in the voluminous folios which have been written on his words and deeds; there is no reason why his file should be further referred to; mountains of fresh manuscript, on men politically living, accumulate over and bury his own, and then, and in this case only, he is finally forgotten by the secret office. Governor after governor, and jailor after jailor, receives hereditarily with his office

the care of these unhappy men, brutalized by their misery and their long confinement; he is ignorant of their names, the world has ceased to remember, and at last the individuals themselves either misdoubt or have forgotten them.

The Russian is not only subject to this terrible *surveillance* within the pale of the empire, but when he travels abroad it follows him like his shadow. In the drawing-rooms of London and Paris, he dreads that the eye of the secret police may be upon him. Foreigners, in their own country, laugh at his terrors, but experience has taught him too painfully how truly they are grounded. The secret police acquires information, or, at least, employs spies, as cheaply as it can; but it purchases them at any price. By a complicated and proportionately expensive system, it has rendered itself all eyes; its very spies are spied upon. The highly paid, and well-selected diplomatic missions of the Russian government, the only effective branch of its service, are as narrowly watched as it is *their* duty to watch over the travelling Russians. It has been related to the author, by a competent authority, and he believes it, that to his informant's knowledge, upwards of a hundred and fifty individuals, in Paris alone, corresponded, directly and indirectly, with this branch of the Russian administration. The payments to most of these people, and their apparent instructions, may emanate from the ministry for foreign affairs, presided by the veteran Nesselrode; but the high-sounding title and presumed importance of his office, does not prevent its being entirely subservient to that of the grand master of the secret police.

The Marquis de Custine relates in his diary a con-

versation he held previous to his embarkation for St. Petersburg, with the landlord of his inn at Lubeck, who was endeavouring to dissuade him from his intended journey.

“ ‘ You have been in Russia ? ’ said I.

“ ‘ No, sir, but I know the Russians. Many pass through Lubeck, and I judge of their country by the physiognomy of its inhabitants.’

“ ‘ What then do you find in the expression of their faces, which should prevent me from visiting them at home ?

“ ‘ Sir, they have two expressions of face. I speak not of their servants, who are without any, and am only alluding to their masters. When these disembark here, to commence their travels in Europe, they appear gay, free, and contented ; they are like horses set at liberty—birds escaped from their cages. Men and women, old and young, all are like school-boys let out to play. On their return, the same people show us long, melancholy, and anxious faces ; their mode of speaking has become short and snappish, and their brows are clouded by care. From this difference I have drawn the conclusion that a country which there is so much joy in quitting, so much regret in returning to, must be a very bad one.’ ”

But the good innkeeper of Lubeck was only partly right in the deductions he had made from his shrewd observations. Every Russian noble, (for none but nobles travel, although they may possess no title, which has nothing to do with their rank,) on landing at Lubeck, or on crossing the frontier, may appear as gay as a released bird, because the Muscovite improvidence of his character allows him to feel mirthsome

with the prospect of immediate enjoyment before him, and the certainty of the evil day of reckoning being a year or two removed ; but when he is returning, there flashes across his mind the dread of all that may have been reported upon his conversation and conduct. Accustomed, at home, to follow the expression of public opinion, expressed as influenced by the fear of despotism, when he arrives in free or constitutional countries, independent of his probable sympathies, the very dread his servility entertains of an opinion which appears a dominant one, induces him to express somewhat analogous sentiments ; and all these he afterwards fears to find recorded where he had as soon thrust his hand into the fire as avow them. But, worse than all, if he have kept the strictest watch upon his words and actions, nothing insures him against the misrepresentations or the calumnies of spies sheltered behind the secrecy of their accusations.

Under these circumstances, it may appear, and it is, matter of surprise, why these people ever return, although, it should be remembered, that it must necessarily be at the expense of their fortune, and of eternal separation from all family connexion and friends in their own country. It may seem to the reader easy for a Russian nobleman to realize at least a considerable portion of his fortune before proceeding abroad ; but the Argus eyes of the secret police render this attempt too dangerous, and no permission to travel would be granted where the slightest suspicion to this effect was entertained. There are not many Muscovites who, for the sake of vindicating individual liberty, will consent, like the old Admiral Tchitchagoff, one of the last of the school of Romanzow and Suwar-

row and of the servitors of Catherine—a sort of Russian Belisarius—to set a tsar at defiance, and, abandoning a princely income, to retire to a humble cottage at Brighton.

When we consider for one moment the prodigious authority of the secret police, the mysterious nature of its proceedings, the proneness of all to whom power is delegated in Russia to oppression and extortion, it is easy to imagine what advantage its agents must take of their peculiar situation, and of the universal terror they inspire. It is true that the grand-master is perpetually struggling against this tendency, as calculated too much to impair the efficiency of the machine which he directs; but his efforts, under circumstances which so much foster this besetting propensity, far from restraining, can hardly check it in the faintest degree. An order, indeed, emanating from the higher authorities of this institution, regarding any obnoxious individual, its subordinates dare not by any bribe be tempted to disobey; but, on their own account, they annoy, alarm, and threaten any other individual, until he has largely sacrificed to their rapacity, to obtain some quiet and protection.

A foreign merchant, of immense fortune, was thus summoned, for some trifling affair, by a messenger from Count Benkendorff's office. On repairing thither, he was kept standing six hours, and then dismissed. The next day he was again ordered to attend; the penalty of disregarding such a summons was too dangerous to incur; he again danced attendance in vain; and thus, week after week, he was annoyed and taken from his important business, the time of his most serious engagements being, as it appeared, wilfully and

maliciously, selected. At last, it was hinted to him, that if he would leave a very considerable sum* at the office as a pledge of his appearance whenever it should be required, he would meet with no further annoyance. He thought it wisest to comply, and from that moment was never asked for.

The Countess Beobrinski, a Roman-catholic lady, was negotiating with the agent intrusted with the sale of some large estates in Poland. The agent was shortly called on by a certain baron in the employ of the secret police, for whom he acted as one of those spies who frequent cafés and restaurants, and who are termed "repressive," because everybody knowing them to be spies, their only use can be to alarm and silence the loquacious Frenchmen who resort to these places, and whose tongues it is so difficult for any despotism to silence. This baron represented to the agent, that his negotiation with the countess was fruitless, because there was an order given by the emperor, through the secret police, not to allow her, on account of her religious persuasion, to purchase any property in Poland; the agent consequently declined all further communication with the countess. At the same time, the police-spy called on her, representing himself as having completed the purchase for another party of the estate of which she seemed so desirous, but intimated that, on paying a certain bonus, it would be ceded to her. The countess, on his departure, repaired in great wrath to the agent, upbraiding him for his want of good faith in having sold to another the property which it had been agreed that she should purchase. The agent shrugged up

* Not less than 200,000 roubles, upwards of 8,000*l*.

his shoulders, and was forced to explain the truth. The Countess Beobrinski, in some alarm, took the bold step of going directly to Count Benkendorff in person. The result of her interview with him was the discovery that no such order had been given, and that the whole transaction was an attempt at extortion on the part of the baron, who, being a foreigner, was sent over the frontier.

This was a singularly audacious attempt; the intended victim shewed unusual boldness; but hundreds of such are daily successful all over the empire, and, because successful, remain unknown.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CIVIL POLICE LAWS AND TRIBUNALS.

BUT if the *haute police*, which is under the direction of Count Benkendorff, is an instrument of humiliation, terror, and annoyance to the higher classes, the more humble grades of society seldom come in collision with it. Yet though their unobtrusive station places them below its notice, they are within the reach of the most infamous and oppressive institution which ever disgraced a country, Christian or heathen—the civil police. The civil police, the great scourge of the middle and lower orders, is everywhere subservient to the high police, but instead of being one institution with many branches, it consists of many establishments in the different provinces of the empire. In the government of St. Petersburg, the grand-master of the police is a man of considerable influence, and his office is considered one of the most lucrative of the empire. It has been for many years filled by General Kokoschkine, an aide-de-camp of the emperor's. In the civil police, extortion and

oppression, which elsewhere seek to hide themselves behind some veil, here walk brazen-fronted. All that the reader may have heard of the old alguazils and the brothers of the Hermandad of Spain, in Le Sage's day, or of the myrmidons of Mahometan cadis, will hardly give him an idea either of their arbitrary power, or the manner in which they use it towards those whose office or station does not place them above its reach. The very existence of the civil police is based on an avowed, if an illegal system of extortion. The police-masters, under the grand-master, the heads of *chaste* or divisions, the majors of quarters, and the naziratels or aids, under them, all receive salaries merely nominal. They not only make fortunes, but are all expected on New Year's Day to make a present to the grand-master, at least tenfold exceeding the amount of their pay. There is no regulation, indeed, to oblige the subordinate to make the present, and there is even an ukase to punish the superior for receiving any; but should the tributary offering fail, the underling would be not only removed, but disgraced, and prosecuted, on some other pretext, with all the rigour an indignant master could display towards a dishonest servant who had betrayed his confidence. Should his present prove below the usual amount, he is removed to a less lucrative situation; and if, on the contrary, his ambition prompt him to sacrifice a larger portion of his iniquitous gains to swell his tribute, or that his superior activity enables him to do so, it ensures promotion to a post which yields a more abundant harvest. A constant emulation is thus kept up in crime, between the members of an institution established to detect and punish it. The reader may form some idea of

the extent to which trade is burthened by these vampires, from the fact that tavern-keepers in St. Petersburg calculate, in a series of years, from forty to sixty per cent. of their profits to be wrung from them, directly and indirectly, by the municipal or civil police. All the inhabitants of the towns, excepting those who are protected by the high offices which they hold, their military rank, or their connexion with people in power, are perpetually exposed to the rapacity of its innumerable officials, grasping, remorseless, and depraved, and invested with an authority over nearly all the population, on which the only check appears to be the observance of an understanding by which to prevent confusion in the perpetration of all the extortion and iniquity of which every large city in Russia presents the hourly spectacle. They parcel out its inhabitants, and respect, to a certain extent, the nefarious "*rights*" of each other, if it be not an Hibernianism to apply this term to profits derived from the bitterest wrongs of their fellow-citizens.

We shall endeavour to give a faint description of the police of the capital; and, loathsome as the subject is, we feel it nevertheless a duty to drag some of its revolting details to the light, if it were only that the knowledge of their existence in the very seat of the executive power, will tend to prove—what must be so difficult for those who have never seen closely the mechanism of an utterly irresponsible despotic government, to believe—that such things can, almost beneath his very eyes, be concealed from the emperor; or, if not concealed, tolerated and sanctioned by him; for that is the alternative.

The police of St. Petersburg may be considered as

a fair sample of the police of the whole empire ; for if in many remote parts of it, more flagrant violations of all laws, human and divine, are committed by this body, it is questionable whether they have the opportunity to entail an aggregate of greater misery on the population, than the incessant vexations, oppressions, and injustices of their brethren within the capital occasion.

In its organization, this police is military ; and in its theory this institution, like almost every other in the empire, is, on the whole, good. Under the grand-master of police, (who holds the rank of a lieutenant-general, an office which, as it has been already mentioned, is, or was recently, vested in the person of Kokoschkine, aide-de-camp of the emperor,) are several *masters* of police, who act as his lieutenants in certain districts of the city. These districts are divided into portions, which are placed under the superintendence of other officers, called *celetsnoi pristoff*, and each division is subdivided into quarters, which are immediately administered by the *chastnoi pristoff*, or major of the quarter. This officer inhabits the station-house, or "*siegé dom*," a government building, containing the police offices, the fire-engines, the places of detention, and distinguished by a high wooden tower, on which a police soldier is always on the look-out for any fires which may break out. He has under his command a certain number of police soldiers, and several subaltern officers called *nadtziratels*, one of whom is generally at the head of an auxiliary office within the *chast*. Police officers and soldiers wear a military uniform, and the latter are armed with swords, and drilled to the use of muskets.

At the corners of almost every third or fourth street, little round wooden houses are erected, at the door of which a police soldier armed with a halbert, and called the *boutouchnik*, or axe man, stands constantly on duty, to maintain the public peace.

All the inferior grades of officers are nominated by the police-master ; and independently of these, in the office of each major, are a number of secretaries and writers, who are immediately chosen by himself. From first to last, a careful selection of all that is most base and villanous, from the depraved and crapulous class of inferior *employés* and their spawn, there is probably scarcely a man amongst them who has not, in the exercise, or rather the abuse of his office, rendered himself amenable to the extreme penalty of those very laws of which he is an executive limb. Venality, extortion, theft, and actually burglary and murder, swell the dark annals of this respectable body ; and yet, if their oppression is felt sensibly every hour, and their crimes constantly brought to light, nine-tenths of them are unknown to all but their immediate victims, such is the system of secrecy which stifles the cry of those who suffer, and ensures impunity. Though but a small portion of their misdeeds can ever come to the knowledge of an observer, yet even these form a frightful and disgusting list.

The memoirs of Vidocq may a little have enlightened the English reader who has had the curiosity or patience to peruse them, as to the villany which has been occasionally carried on in France, even under a government which was not wholly arbitrary, and in the midst of a people who boasted pre-eminence in civilization ; but even Vidocq might have gone to school in St. Peters-

burg, where the close atmosphere of despotism and of concealment have fostered to the utmost the diabolical system of which he boasted.

The law of the empire, it is true, invests the civil police with little more discretionary power than in England is entrusted to the magistracy; but as all access to complaint is carefully shut, and as innumerable vexatious regulations, which it is next to impossible that a citizen can always fulfil, render him certain of being at some future date legally at the mercy of its ministers, they venture with impunity to exercise the most arbitrary authority, and have so long been accustomed to blind submission, that they scarcely know themselves how far their own attributes will warrant their conduct.

The population has neither any very correct ideas on this subject, nor if it had, would it dare to avail itself of this knowledge. Accustomed to see all laws and regulations utterly perverted, it has no faith in them, and who can be found to resist the most crying injustice, in the uncertainty that his voice, which so many are interested in smothering, will ever be heard in the proper quarter; or in the doubt of ever obtaining redress at all, and in the face of certain punishment and vengeance, with which, sooner or later, he would be visited by the vindictive feeling he had evoked? From first to last, they are therefore a set of petty tyrants, whose sole occupation is to devise means of extortion. But what renders them peculiarly odious, in a land where corruption is common to all branches of the administration, is the fact that they prey chiefly on the unfortunate; and that where others rob and pilfer, and find their harvest by making

a sale of their duties, the police wring their infamous gains from the terror of their victims, in the form of bribes to purchase relief from their oppression.

At the same time that it is so corrupt, it would be difficult to shew a more inefficient body, destined to the same duties of preserving order, and suppressing and detecting crime. Although in the annual report of the police-master to the Emperor, he always presents a picture of the morality of the capital which no other city in the universe can offer, so favourable is it to the virtue of its inhabitants,—there are probably more robberies and assassinations committed in St. Petersburg alone, than in Paris and London—nay, in all the European capitals put together. No criminal intelligence is ever allowed to be given in the newspapers, and it seldom spreads beyond the small circle who have become immediately acquainted with the crime committed. But even in his own quarter of the town, a man may often casually acquire the positive knowledge of more murders and more burglaries, than appears at the year's end in the official list for the whole capital, or the whole empire, and which professes to be an authentic record of all which have taken place during the twelvemonth.

It is especially in the long winter months, when the nights are dark, and the Neva frozen over, that both on the river and in the suburbs, many assassinations take place. How frequent they must be, the number of dead bodies which float down to the gulf of Finland on the breaking up of the frost sufficiently attest. They are generally drunken people, murdered by the sledge-drivers, who use either their hatchet or their knives, and it is very seldom that any

pursuit is set on foot, the police contenting themselves with the more easy task of concealing the fact, if some of its members have not connived at it.

The *boutouchniks*, or street watchmen, in the remote situations where these dark deeds are committed, are perhaps mostly concerned in such assassinations, whilst, beyond all doubt, an understanding exists between the majors of *chasts* and those professional thieves which infest their quarters, and who *do not wear the imperial uniform*. It is not unfrequent to see the same audacious malefactor several times secured in the act of robbery, by the same person, and as often released by the police, who find it more profitable to leave him at large, and who therefore would only punish him if bribed to do so more highly than the thief could bribe. The detection of an unknown thief is of very rare occurrence; the recovery of the stolen property by its original possessor is unknown; for even if the sufferer can point it out, he soon finds that it has only passed from the hands of professional, into those of privileged robbers. In no instance can he ever get it back without paying its full value; but he is not unlikely to meet with the man who had abstracted it, at liberty in the next street, who will quietly and piously give him his benediction as he passes.

The inefficiency of this body, when they most seriously exert themselves, was most signally shewn some years ago, on the occasion of the robbery of two brass cannons, which were stolen in broad daylight from the gardens of the grand Duke Michel's palace, on an arm of the Neva. It was weeks and weeks before all the thousands of police agents employed

in the research for it, could discover the stolen property, which was not of a nature very portable, or very easily concealed, and which, after all, the thieves were quietly employed in breaking up.

In all cases where it becomes of moment to discover the party guilty of offence against the higher powers, they are much embarrassed, and perfectly understand how to find a criminal, or at least, a scapegoat, without making much search for the real one.

During the administration of the late police-master, a personage of considerable importance discovered, on stepping into his sledge, that he had either lost his pocket-book containing two thousand roubles, or been robbed of it. He applied to one of the police officers, insisting that it should be found. The police major asked for a description of it, and of the numbers of the notes. He was answered, that the latter were unknown, and that no distinct recollection of the pocket-book was entertained, further than that it was a new red one, and that it certainly contained the sum in question. An hour after, the police-major returned triumphantly; he had placed the thief in custody, and he restored the pocket-book with its contents untouched, to its illustrious owner, who passed a warm eulogium on the activity and zeal of the body to which the major belonged, and probably recommended him for promotion. The next day, however, his Highness felt something hard in the lining of his fur pelisse, which, on examination, proved to be the original pocket-book, with its notes, which had slipped through a rent in the pocket, and which the policeman had pretended to restore to him; the hopes of his patronage, and the fear of his displeasure, having been con-

his story
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sidered worth a sacrifice of two thousand roubles! We never heard what became of the thief who had been taken into custody for a theft which had never been committed; but as he would undoubtedly have been punished but for the accident which established his innocence, and as all the evidence was prepared to render his guilt undeniably plain, it was probably not thought worth while to reverse the sentence of so insignificant an individual.

During the reign of the Emperor Paul, some epigrammatic lines, already quoted, appeared upon the walls of the Isaac's church which Catherine had begun to build in marble, and which her son continued in brick, to the effect, that "the materials which the two sovereigns had used were characteristic of their respective reigns." The emperor insisted that the writer should be found, and (as we have related elsewhere) the police, with very little difficulty, discovered and convicted a culprit, whose tongue was ordered to be cut out—a sentence which was rigorously carried into execution. After the death of Paul, the innocence of the sufferer was proved, by the voluntary confession of the author of the pasquinade.

The following occurrences, made known by the merest chance, and which took place two winters ago, will furnish evidence of some of the foul deeds attributed to the guardians of public security. Three Russian merchants, who had been enjoying copious potations, were returning home very much the worse for liquor, and one of them was so far intoxicated, that his companions were obliged to leave him in custody of the *boutouchnik*, or watchman. In the course of a few hours, when they were a little sobered,

regretting what they had done, they went back to fetch him, but the boutouchnik and the two police soldiers declared that he had gone away long since. They were about to depart, satisfied of the truth of this statement, when one of them espied the boots and cap of his missing friend, which he immediately recognised. In consequence of the suspicions excited by this circumstance, they repaired to the grand-master of police, in whose office they had some friend, through the intercession of whom orders were obtained that an immediate search should be made of the *boudtke*, or watch-house. Although the body of their companion was not at first forthcoming, his clothes, together with those of many other individuals, were discovered in possession of the boutouchnik and his assistants, and a hole was at last perceived, which communicated from the interior of the watch-house with the canal, near which it was situated. Here the remains of the murdered man were discovered; and in the course of the investigation which ensued, it was elicited that a wholesale system of murder had long been carried on in the watch-box, by its guardians, who were in league with the waiters of a neighbouring tavern, who, when any of their guests were sufficiently intoxicated, caused them to be conveyed away by the boutouchnik, who, after murdering them, stripped the bodies, which were cast through this hole below the ice of the canal, whence, long before it broke up, they would be carried away by the current.

These assassinations were daily perpetrated in a little wooden box, scarce ten feet in diameter, in the Nevsky Prospect, the most populous street in St. Petersburg, and which is generally as much crowded

as the upper end of Oxford-street in London. The guilty parties were punished with the knout ; but the whole circumstance acquired more than usual notoriety from the fact, that the emperor, to whose ears it came, caused some of the waiters who were accessories to be flogged before the windows of all the tavern-keepers of the quarter. But for this it might never have transpired beyond the walls of the *chast*.

The next instance concerned the police-major of one of the principal *chasts* of the city. An old gentleman, in a precarious state of health, arrived a little after the new year from Moscow, at the London Hotel, on the Isaac's Plain. He fell ill, and as he had apparently no friends in Petersburg, the police-doctor was called in to attend him, *who recommended a nurse*. Feeling himself get suddenly much worse, he wrote a letter to his nephew at Moscow, stating that he had been taken ill, and that he had that day experienced such extraordinary sensations, that he doubted much whether he would live till his arrival. He entreated him not to delay his departure for an instant, and informed him, should he have breathed his last before he could reach St. Petersburg, of the full amount of the property he had left behind him, which was rather considerable, and chiefly in "bank obligations," of which he gave him the numbers and a minute description. In a few hours after, he was a corpse, and the major of the quarter, who was watching the event, having examined his effects, ordered him to be buried.

A few days subsequently to these circumstances, the nephew arrived in St. Petersburg. On inquiring for his uncle, he was informed that he was dead, that

the major of the quarter had declared that he had not left property enough to defray the expenses of his funeral, and that, in consequence, he had been buried in the shell of a common pauper. The nephew went to the bank, and having ascertained that his uncle's statement was perfectly correct, he requested them to detain the bearer of the bills bearing the numbers which had been transmitted to him, as a person holding stolen property. A few days after, a man presented himself to get several of them cashed. When taken into custody, he prevaricated in his account of the manner in which he had obtained them, asserting at first that he had found them, until he was at last induced to confess that he had been sent by the chastnoi pristoff. On receiving this intelligence, the nephew of the deceased went straight to the military governor, with whom he had sufficient influence to cause the domicile of the police-officer to be searched, before he was apprised of the arrest of his agent, and here the missing bills were discovered. The major of the quarter, as soon as he found that the nurse was being interrogated, swallowed a dose of arsenic; his life was however saved by the timely application of the stomach-pump, and subsequently, to the surprise of every one, he was pardoned by the emperor. The fact of his being the principal protégé of the grand-master of the police, and connected with him by marriage, may at once account for such unusual clemency, since the investigation of the case was left to him, and it may readily be understood that the police, who have such facilities for proving an innocent man guilty, cannot be much embarrassed, at a push, to prove a guilty man innocent. It was, never-

theless, so public and flagrant a violation of justice, as to excite, even in St. Petersburg, some faint indignation.

It must be observed that in both these instances peculiar circumstances led to the detection of the crime, by favouring investigation in a manner which, where police myrmidons are concerned, cannot happen once in a thousand times. It may, therefore, be fairly presumed, that where, in the period of a few weeks, two similar acts, perpetrated by unconnected individuals of the same body, were brought to light, many others were committed in the darkness which it is so difficult for the public eye to penetrate.

Before we proceed to a few of the means of annoyance to which they resort, to plunder the population their office has been instituted to protect, we must mention, à propos of their efficiency, that even as firemen, in which capacity they also act, they are exceedingly incapable; yet nothing can surpass the admirable regulations which have been laid down to preserve the city from the effects of fire, or the means resorted to of subduing its violence wherever it has broken out, Yet fires are very frequent in the capital, and whenever they occur, they are seldom put out by the fire-engines or the policemen, though they are prevented from spreading by the thousands of soldiers who collect on the spot, and who, in a very short time, pull down adjacent buildings.

Yet, to witness the scene which takes place on the outbreak of a fire, one would imagine that nowhere in the world was the fireman's department so admirably managed. On the first smoke which is visible by day, or the first flame by night, the sentinels,

who are always watching in the towers of the police-stations, immediately telegraph to all the others, in what quarter of the town it has taken place. The horses, which are kept perpetually harnessed, are in an instant put to the engines, and in a few minutes, these, together with attendant water-casks, on all of which the firemen are mounted, pour out of all the *siegés* in the town, traversing it to the scene of danger at the full gallop of their magnificent horses; for, without exception, the finest and most spirited horses in the city are those belonging to the fire-engines, as may easily be understood, when it is explained, that they are all recruited from the fiery steeds which run away in the streets, and are unmercifully confiscated by the law—a circumstance, which, if it does not as much as would be believed, tend to prevent the frequent occurrence of accidents, always occasions the drives whose team has run foul of anything to bolt as fast as possible, without stopping to inquire what injury he has done.

The number of these fire-engines, which rattle across the streets on the alarm of fire, together with the fact of their being entirely horsed from the confiscated steeds of private individuals, whose horses have occasioned some accident, is of itself a speaking example of the folly of trusting to the government reports in Russia, as some travellers have done, who marvel at the skill of the Russians when in the large city of St. Petersburg their reckless driving occasions so few accidents, that only *two are reported* during a whole twelvemonth.

It is true, that if it were not for this regulation perhaps many more casualties might take place; for

the Russians are fond of rapid driving, and there are some amongst them who would not think much of driving over a few moujiks; and, at least, arbitrary as the regulation may seem, the emperor himself has given an example of submission to it, for very recently one of the horses in his sledge having shewn a disposition to bolt, he caused it immediately to be sent to the next police-station.

On reaching the scene of action, at which probably a greater number of engines are collected in a short space of time than in any other city in the world, the firemen commence operations by smashing all the windows of the burning house and of those adjoining, as if for the especial purpose of giving a better draught to the fire. The engines, which are at all times badly supplied with water, as soon as they begin to play, shew how lamentably deficient they are in power, being seldom able to send their jet higher than the first floor, and, notwithstanding all the imposing apparatus and appearance which leads one to look at first with great confidence to the exertions of the firemen, in nine cases out of ten the only effect of all their efforts is to refresh the destructive element, by pouring upon it just sufficient water to make the flame more fierce.

There exists a police regulation, obliging the proprietor of every house to keep a tub of water at all times on the roof, for the purpose of wetting it in case of danger from the falling sparks, in the event of any proximate building burning; but the regulation is observed, like many others in Russia, by keeping a cask on the spot indicated, but which is sure to be

empty, even if there should be a bottom to it to hold water, which is by no means generally the case.

So much for their efficiency as firemen, though it is greater in that capacity than in any other; so much for judicious regulations never carried out!

Amongst the by-laws which entangle the people and place them at the mercy of the police, the passport system is the most fruitful source of vexation. According to its laws, every man unprovided with a passport, whatever his rank, unless he be actually in the service of government, is considered as a vagabond, and the vagabond is treated just as the felon of other countries. It is true that in many other countries of Europe, where the same odious system is established, the letter of the law is equally severe on this subject, since it renders every individual whose passport is not in proper order liable to detention; yet, excepting under peculiar circumstances of suspicion, this rigorous measure is never resorted to, and then only until by proper references he can establish his identity. In Russia, on the contrary, it is eagerly carried into execution in its most merciless extension, and every neglected formality entails heavy and accumulating fines, which may utterly ruin a poor man, or leave him for ever at the mercy of the passport office.

This passport must be yearly renewed, and on its renewal, a certain sum is paid, which varies according to the occupation of the bearer, unless he be a nobleman, in which case he receives it gratis. But if he allows the date fixed for its renewal to pass over, a fine is inflicted for every day. So far, although a very

annoying regulation, this rigour may be defended, on the plea, that it is necessary to enforce what after all is a means of collecting a capitation tax. But when this object is secured by the payment of the tax, the owner of the passport is still subject to the influence of the most vexatious rules; he is bound to cause it to be noted, as well as the address of his residence, on the books of the police-office of his quarter, whenever he changes his residence; whenever he sleeps for one night under another roof, he is obliged to go through the formality of erasing his name from the books, and having it written in afresh. The police have the power to make him wait four-and-twenty hours before they will *write him out*, and the next office just as long before they will write him in, and may, moreover, refuse to deliver it into any hands but his own; and unless he bribe them, they are sure to avail themselves of their full power to annoy. Should he rashly neglect to do as the law directs, both himself and the householder who has given him shelter are liable to fine.

The householder is responsible for all who spend a night beneath his roof; the master is responsible for his servants; should the least neglect have occurred in the form of their papers, he is fined. The fine is, in most cases, so much per day, and the police usually leave their victim for many months in unconscious security before they pounce upon him. When he wishes to travel, if only to an adjacent town, if only a few miles into the country, his passport must be changed for another at the passport office, which will not give this travelling pass without a certificate from the major of the quarter, that he has no objection to make to his departure.

The certificate must be first signed by the naziratel, or lieutenant of the subdivision of the quarter in which he lives; to his office, the traveller must therefore first repair. Here, amongst dirt and filth, are four or five writers, whose appearance denotes the lowest victims of vice and debauchery. The favour of these wretches must first be propitiated before he can proceed in the business about which he is come, for they have to write out the form of the document he requires, and may keep him waiting a time unlimited. He has then to induce the naziratel to sign it. Having proceeded thus far, he must next take it to the major of his quarter, and get his signature added to that of his lieutenant; and still the document is not valid before he can prevail on one of the writers at the *siege* to affix to it the seal of the office. All this must be effected by a silver key. Although none of these officials can refuse to do their duty, they may delay, ad libitum, its performance. The writers may refuse for several days to make out the certificate; the naziratel, for several more, to sign it; the major, to countersign it; and the secretaries to put the seal upon it.

The aggregate of all this time wasted may amount to several weeks before the person wishing to travel to an adjacent town—perhaps only intending to spend there four-and-twenty hours—can obtain permission to depart; and if he venture to depart without it, he is liable to be marched back, tied to a common felon or a runaway slave. In a case of life and death, the same impediments lie in his path, and there is only one way of removing them—by bribing successively all these officials; for if he consents freely to pay his

way, these obstacles are very easily overcome, where the only object is extortion. Should he, however, be imprudent enough to let it be known that it is a case of imminent necessity, advantage will be taken of it to extract from him two or three times the sum which usually satisfies their rapacity.

When, armed with this certificate, the citizen has at length obtained his travelling pass, and set forth upon his journey, if he remain longer than three days in the town to which he has repaired, he must exchange this travelling pass against a passport of residence; and if, the fourth day, he wishes to return, all the same formalities are to be gone through to obtain one which will take him safe back again. Thus the passport is like the chain of the galley-slave, whose clank perpetually reminds him of his servitude.

It is not that these delays and vexations are usually experienced by the traveller, because, in almost every case, he submits quietly to give what is demanded; but these are what the police have the power of subjecting him to when *he will not pay*. Naturally with a body whose venality is excessive, the power of wealth is very great in securing its possessor from molestation, if he do not refuse to bleed freely; but the first untoward circumstance which throws him into their hands, is taken advantage of to strip him of it unmercifully.

A mass of formalities, equally tedious and useless to pass through as those of which a faint outline has been given, as connected with the passport system, or regulations as severe and complicate, envelope the whole intercourse of the police with the people; and therefore it cannot be wondered at that the latter seek

to evade them by purchasing the indulgence of their tyrants, and that they should be living mostly in habitual violation of the law. There are thus few men whom the police has not the power to ruin, and none, unless protected by exalted or official station, whose life it cannot render miserable.

In allusion to Kokoschkine, the grand-master of police, some mention has already been made of the systematic corruption which pervades this body, and of the spirit of infamous emulation which its chiefs have introduced into it. It must be added, however, that the grand-master, in his intercourse with all his subalterns, never directly encourages any violation of the law, or sanctions any action diametrically opposed to their duty; such, therefore, they must always indulge in at their own peril; but he does avow the principle, that they may withhold the performance of their duty until it is enforced by very substantial and satisfactory reasons.

It is easy under such circumstances to imagine the conduct of men depraved as the author has endeavoured to describe, on whom their own attributes confer the discretionary power which one sees sometimes misapplied in the broad daylight of publicity, even by the conscientious magistrates of happier climes.

Every commercial transaction under the value of two thousand roubles, is decided by them without appeal; every civil case must pass in its earliest stage through the hands of the police major, who also decides on the evidence which is to commit any criminal for trial. He has the right to administer corporal punishment to all who are not freemen, and we have

seen that many first guild merchants are slaves. He carries into execution, *in private*, the sentence of the plitt awarded by the criminal courts; and within the walls of his *siege* is a place of detention, intended for those on whose committal he is to decide, and therefore only as a place of confinement for a very few days; and yet it is generally crowded with wretches whom he keeps imprisoned for weeks, and often months, and the greater number of whom are never committed for trial at all, because either there never was any evidence against them, and that their captivity is a mere scheme to extort money, or because they have been able to pay sufficiently high to be released from prosecution.

Let us see, from the narrative of M. Pernet, what passes within these walls. "The two first days," says Custine, "he was left without food." . . . "The only sounds that met his ear were those of the rods with which, from morning to night, the unfortunate slaves, sent by their masters to this house for castigation, were being punished. Add to this the fearful sounds of sobs and tears, of the howlings of victims, the threats and imprecations of executioners, and you may form some idea of the moral torture to which our unfortunate countryman was, for four weary days, exposed, always without knowing the motive of his detention. A slight partition divided his cell from the interior court in which these executions took place."

Monsieur Pernet understands the Russ language. He was present, without being an eye-witness, at many torturings, unknown beyond these walls. Now it was two young girls, workwomen at a fashionable

Moscow milliner's; these unhappy creatures were being flogged under the very eye of their mistress, who reproached them with having dared to bring their lovers into her very house—the house of a Moscow milliner!!! What an enormity! Nevertheless, this virago kept exhorting the executioners to strike harder; one of these young girls cried for mercy—she appeared dying, and was covered with blood. What matter? She had had the insolence to say that she was no more culpable than her mistress, who only now redoubled her severity. M. Pernet assured me—adding, nevertheless, that he could hardly wonder at my doubting his assertion—that each of these unhappy creatures received at several times one hundred and eighty strokes. “I suffered too much in counting them,” said their fellow-prisoner, “to be mistaken in the figure.” Next came the turn of peasants sent by the steward of some proprietor; of a serf, a hired servant punished at the request of his master. Nothing, in fact, but revengeful acts of atrocity, iniquities, and unseen despair.

If we now turn from the police to the Russian laws, though the tribunals and judges who administer them are shamelessly corrupt, we shall find them complete, and, in their general character, mild and equitable; but they are almost as confused, and more contradictory than those of England. This striking difference exists, however, between their administration—whilst in England some of the wisest and ablest men in the kingdom are employed to watch over their application, in as strict conformity as possible with the letter of law or the spirit of equity, in Russia the ingenuity of their guardians is exhausted in efforts to per-

vert it. Even in England, we all know that too often law is not justice; what must it, therefore, be in Russia?

The Russian criminal and civil code, contained in eleven ponderous volumes, is a collection of *ukases*. The ukase is the solemn expression of the tsar's commands; it is the bull of the popes, with this additional peculiarity, that nothing can destroy its force except another ukase specifically annihilating it; for though a subsequent one should appear contradictory, both in letter and in spirit, it is not thereby invalidated, but both are laws. Now it would have been well for humanity, if the sovereigns of this empire had been as merciful to their fellow-creatures, as they have been to the ukases of their predecessors; but though they have all made many, they have unmade few. The consequence of this has been the most chaotic confusion, in which those charged with the administration of the laws find warrant and authority for any misapplication their venality suggests. The late Emperor Alexander, at his death, left upwards of twenty-four thousand ukases which had not been carried into execution.

Before the reign of Peter the Great, his predecessors were obliged to adhere to the oath by which the first Romanoff, the founder of their greatness, had bound himself and his descendants to consult his grandees on every important question, and to make no new laws without their sanction; and the very formula of the ukases of those days, which began with "The Council of the Boyars ordereth," shewed them not to be instruments of undivided, though they might be of absolute, authority.

But in changing the formula of these documents, Peter rendered the will of the tsars as unshackled as it was mighty, and concentrated in his own person a power greater than even that which the united sovereign and parliament of Great Britain enjoy, since the most able juriconsults deny to the latter the right of changing the fundamental principles of the constitution, whereas the power of the autocrat is boundless. Since this step of the great reformer, the tsar's will is the law, and the ukase is the formal expression of it. It may either contain a legislative rule of conduct for present and future generations; it may be the terrible instrument which at a few strokes of the pen crushes the independence of a nation, and tramples on its rights; or it may be a mere order, on a subject so trivial and unimportant, as to degenerate into the ludicrous and absurd. We will endeavour, by the following anecdote, to exemplify this.

Towards the latter end of his reign, the Emperor Paul, whose character was gloomy and suspicious, had imbibed the idea that designs hostile to his throne and life were entertained by unknown conspirators, who were endeavouring to diffuse through the public mind contempt and disrespect for his person, which might eventually favour the execution of their designs. This suspicion was not so absurd as it may, on the first blush, appear, since it was by pursuing a similar policy that Catherine, his mother, had succeeded in removing her husband, and succeeding to his throne. Eventually it proved not to have been unfounded, though the tsar forgot that his very conduct furnished his enemies with their principal arms against him. In these ideas he was encouraged by his favourite, Count Pahlen, afterwards the chief of

his assassins, whose policy seemed to be to cause his master to make himself appear as insane as possible in the eyes of the public, to facilitate the revolution he meditated. He easily persuaded the credulous monarch that his subjects on every occasion shewed a contemptuous want of deference; and when he drove abroad with him, he confirmed Paul's moody fancies, by pointing out to him groups of the people, who being very distant, had ventured to remain covered. Paul was at last worked up to publishing a set of thundering edicts, which laid down the rules of decorum to be followed in the imperial city, and amongst other absurdities, he commanded, under the severest penalties, that all who met him should kneel down bare-headed; that carriages should stop, and those within, whether males or females, should alight and perform their genuflexions in the snow or mud.

It may easily be imagined that people were not very anxious, under these circumstances, to meet with this amiable sovereign, and whenever they could catch a distant glimpse of the imperial carriage, they fled in every direction. This conduct still further offended Paul, and no wonder that he should feel galled in thus receiving the cut direct from his subjects. He caused his equipage to be accompanied by several mounted Cossacs, who were despatched in pursuit of any who seemed flying at his approach. In the fulfilment of this duty, they one day brought up to the emperor an individual who had been detected endeavouring to skulk down a bye-lane. The furious despot demanded his name, and how he dared to insult his emperor by thus seeking to avoid him, as if he were a wild beast? The culprit replied that he was an Englishman, and a member of the British

factory, and asseverated with the utmost solemnity, that he had no intention of shunning the honour of a rencontre with so august a personage, and he pleaded excessive near-sightedness as the cause of his not having recognised the imperial vehicle. "Then," said the tsar, "if you are near-sighted, we insist from this day forward on your wearing spectacles, that this infirmity may not be the cause of such indecorous conduct again." And an ukase was by order made out to that effect.

As it was a reign of terror in the capital, the merchant was glad to conform, and he became either so much accustomed to these useful auxiliaries to contracted vision, or his eyesight, which was previously good, became weakened by the use of them, or by other causes, that he continues to wear them to this day, and has never tried the question whether the police would attempt to punish him for disobedience to an ukase if he were to leave them off; for it has never been repealed, and probably never will be so, as it is not likely that the present emperor will give one out on a subject so absurd. He is always pointed at as the gentleman who wears spectacles by ukase.

The next instance is scarcely less absurd. A small house with pointed brick façade, on the Vasili-ostroff, an island of the Neva, on which most of the commerce of the town is carried on, contrasting by its peculiarity with the dwellings which surround it, still attests the truth of the anecdote. In the reign of the late emperor, an English plumber, named Clayworth, who was the proprietor and builder of it, petitioned Alexander to be allowed to leave the plain brick facing in the English state, which the regulations determining

the very colour of which houses, roofs, and shutters in the capital must be painted, forbade. His petition was graciously granted, and an ukase appeared to the effect that, as an exception, the house of the plumber should be of plain brick, pointed with white. Many years after, the highly-favoured owner of this mansion changed his mind, and thought of plastering the front of it, but he had no sooner commenced, than the police interfered, and refused to allow him to proceed, because the very law which entitled him to the distinction of the plain brick façade, rendered it illegal for him to plaster it or paint it. In small things, as in great, it will thus be seen that the ukase is a formidable document.

It is only since the accession of Nicholas, that the judges of the criminal and civil tribunals of the empire have learned to appreciate the glorious confusion of the laws. Previously to this their decisions were influenced either by the bribes of the parties concerned, or by the recommendation and interest of people in power, whom they dared not disoblige. They were then not fettered by the necessity of giving the faintest legal colouring to their sentence, which the strict orders of the present emperor have enforced. But if occasionally this may tax their ingenuity a little, and if it require a tolerable acquaintance with the laws, to continue, notwithstanding, in their former course, *justice is as much perverted as ever*. There exists only this difference, that where before it was bartered for *interest or money*, as the case might be, it is now exclusively *sold*, since those who are charged with its administration, pleading the severity of the emperor's

orders, find a ready excuse for not acceding to the wishes of their friends and patrons, and thus reserve all their decisions as a fertile source of pecuniary advantage.

It is very difficult that a case should present itself which can embarrass the members of a tribunal to determine it in any way that may suit their interest; only that the more flagrant the violation of equity required of them, the higher bribe they demand. But just or unjust, which is accordingly as justice or injustice have been bid highest for, their decisions must now always be *legal*. The only result of the emperor's efforts to obtain for his subjects the impartial application of the laws, has therefore hitherto been to render the places of his judges and their assistants more lucrative, and themselves more cautious, but not more honest.

The criminal law does not extend the penalty of death to any offence excepting high treason. Its abolition was projected by the Empress Elizabeth, and carried into effect by Catherine the Second, who, with all her faults, and they were many and heavy, was the wisest and best sovereign that has yet ruled the Russian empire. The capital punishment for crimes of the blackest dye is now limited, at the utmost, to forty strokes of the knout, to civil death, and to perpetual exile in the mines of Siberia.

The knout is a long, thick, and strongly-plaited whip, at the end of which is a tongue of leather, something the shape of an arrow-head, but hard and heavy. It is principally the skill of the executioner which renders the instrument so formidable. He is always himself a condemned felon, who is pardoned

on condition of exercising this calling for twelve successive years. During this time he is incessantly practising, and can generally use his knout with such effect as to smash a brick-bat to powder at the first blow. He has two ways of killing his victim when required: one is by binding a cord round the neck in such a manner, that by his own efforts the sufferer dislocates the vertebræ; the next is, by cutting into the intestines, which he can generally do at once. This, however, excepting in political cases, or to execute the vengeance of some official, he is never permitted to do, and it is of rare occurrence that death is the consequence of this punishment; excepting, indeed, subsequently, on the two years' journey to Siberia, whither convicts are marched, chained together, and upon which a large proportion of them perish, whether they have received the knout or not.

But if the retribution of justice on the worst crimes against society be apparently lenient, there is no proper scale of punishment, and therefore, on minor offences it falls with great comparative severity. The parricide receives the knout and is exiled for life to Siberia; the fraudulent bankrupt, who has been convicted of withholding the smallest item of property from his creditors (and it is well known in Russia that in ninety-nine bankruptcies out of a hundred which have not come under that denomination are most flagrantly so) is condemned to the *plitt*, and is equally sent to Siberia for life. Now, the only difference between the punishment of the *knout* and of the *plitt* is, that the latter, instead of being administered in public, is given within the walls of a *siege*, with an instrument a little less heavy than the knout, and from the strokes of which

it is very questionable whether the culprit suffers one iota less. It is true, that in the privacy of the *siege*, the executioner, and those presiding at the execution, the officers of the civil police, may often be bribed to render it nearly insignificant; but, on the other hand, what reclamation can the victim ever make, if his punishment be augmented by them as a means of extortion? The murderer, who receives the knout in public, also contrives to purchase the goodwill of his executioner; for when driven to the place of punishment, an immemorial custom has given the latter the privilege of stopping before every public-house and demanding a glass of spirits, and during the time he is drinking it, the crowd shew their commiseration by showering copper coins upon the criminal.

It may be very true, that on the arrival of these culprits in Siberia, their treatment may be widely different. One, condemned to the mines, and shut out from the light of heaven, may long for that death which a mercy, in this case certainly mistaken, has denied him; the other, through time and good conduct, may become eventually a prosperous colonist. But, nevertheless, the eyes of the people will discern little difference in the punishment when they depart together, and it will appear, for both these crimes, so disproportioned in their enormity, as almost the same.

All the additional sufferings to which the more guilty party is subsequently exposed, in a remote part of the empire, would therefore be only wanton cruelty when lost as an example to deter others; since, though the law of self-preservation may allow society to punish as a warning, society, which is human and erring, can have no right to inflict pain as matter of revenge.

Besides this, it is the universal, and not an unfounded belief, that the degree of criminality has nothing to do in reality with the treatment—and who returns to tell?

The forms of trial in all criminal cases in Russia are eminently inefficient to secure the real ends of justice. When the accused is committed by the police, and given over to the criminal court, it is seldom less than eight months, often more than three years, before his case is disposed of, during which time he remains in prison. This long delay is equally iniquitous, whether he be acquitted or proved guilty in the judgment of the tribunal—since, if guilty, it is screening the culprit, if acquitted, it is detaining an innocent man for a term which, on an average, is the tenth part of his remaining life. The whole trial is carried on in writing, and he is never confronted with the witnesses, nor allowed to read the depositions on which he has been condemned, even after it is over. After all, his fate is pronounced, not by a jury of his peers, but by a corrupt tribunal.

One consequence of the manner in which the law is administered in Russia is, that of the various classes of lawyers which are connected with it in other countries, only that of the notary exists. It is so universally known that the most successful advocate is a bank note, that no one would waste his money in feeing the most skilful lawyer, and the set of men who assume that name scarcely pick up a miserable subsistence, by hanging about the courts, and acting occasionally as the medium through which the bribe is transmitted.

Though some of the punishments awarded by the

Russian code are very lenient, there are some whose severity has caused them to become altogether obsolete. The law of defamation is a most remarkable instance of this nature; it condemns the man who accuses another, by word or deed, of any crime or offence, if he cannot prove his assertion, to the same punishment as the man he has defamed would have been subjected to, had he succeeded in proving the accusation.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSPIRACY OF THE RUSSIAN NOBILITY, AND REVOLT
OF THE 26TH OF DECEMBER, 1825.

THE events to which the title of the present chapter refers, have been only vaguely known to the rest of Europe, though both in the general interest of the subject, and in its stirring details, it bears all the characteristics of a great and eventful drama. The general conspiracy of the only class of a nation of sixty millions who have any claim to civilization, against the corrupt and demoralizing tyranny under which they have been gradually more closely trampled in the dust—a tyranny centering in the only power which at the present day may be considered as the serious *propagandist* of that despotism which all other European absolutists seek only to conserve where already established, and where existing in a comparatively temperate form. Beside such a conspiracy as this, those which menaced the existence of the gloomy government of Venice, and whose details are familiar to us all, fade into insignificance. In the contrasts of character of the numerous actors, the cowardice and

selfishness of the mass, the disinterestedness and heroism of the few, and in its tragic termination, exist all the elements which render some passages of history so dramatic, and throw both shadows and vivid lights across the most striking scenes of that unvarying chronicle of crimes and follies.

Those enthusiasts whose motives and intentions differed even further than their subsequent conduct from their associates, chiefly men of birth and family, and youthful promise, alone took any active part in its closing and fatal scene, and played it out with courage and devotion. They were nearly all in the Imperial army. One part of the army itself, divided regiment against regiment, was made unconsciously the instrument for striking the decisive blow; whilst the other served to crush in its cradle all hope of shaking off a yoke intolerable to that small portion of the Russian people which had imbibed the faintest civilization, unperceived by the great mass of its serfs, who were notoriously sunk into a state of degradation and apathy scarcely one remove above the cattle of their fields.

Nevertheless, although we have never seen any printed account which was even tolerably complete and correct, of an episode so important in the European history of the last few years, we find it constantly alluded to, in various works on Russia, (in Dr. Granville, in Bremner, in Letters from the Baltic, and, lastly, in Custine,) from which it would appear that these authors have derived their notions of the circumstances connected with it from the accounts of those in power. Now within the pale of the Russian empire, where the very walls have ears, and where a word,

if unnoticed at the moment, is never forgotten, but is noted down, as we have seen in a preceding chapter, in black and white against the utterer, in the voluminous documents attached in the secret police office to every individual's character, (the result of the labours of a vast army of spies,) all those who do not care to confirm the representations of government on any subject, however trifling, hold their tongues, whether as to a conspiracy, a revolution, a defeat, a fatal accident, or the disputed fact of whether the crack in the granite column of Alexander—the pride of St. Petersburg, and of the present reign—be a real or only an apparent flaw.

With regard to the character of such a conspiracy as led to the insurrection of a portion of the army, and to the consequent bloodshed in the streets of Petersburg, it would have been as useless to have asked the opinion of the Venetian Council of Ten on the Doge whom they doomed to the scaffold, or of the Committee of Public Safety in the Reign of Terror on the offences of their victims, as to expect any veracity in the accounts of the agents of the Russian government. Those of the fortunate actors who escaped unscathed, or those who, by their direct or indirect connexion with the conspiracy or the conspirators, are able and willing to throw any light upon it, will seldom confide their testimony to more than a single friendly ear, with carefully closed doors, in whispered tones, and with precautions which might better have besecmed the progress of the undertaking than the mere relation of it.

But all are agreed in the main points of their story, and they refer for the confirmation of it to the admissions of the committee of inquiry appointed by the

emperor, in parts of the evidence which it incautiously made public. This commission consisted of the Grand Duke Michael; of Tatischeff, then minister of war; of Count Tchornicheff, who has since held that office, and is now viceroy of Poland; of Count Benkendorff, grand-master of the secret police; of Koutouzoff, who succeeded Miloradovitch (killed in the insurrection) as military governor of St. Petersburg; of Levacheff and Potapoff, aides-de-camp of the emperor; and of the state counsellors Bloudoff and Gallitzin.

The Marquis de Custine alludes to those events, as having furnished an occasion on which the Emperor Nicholas distinguished himself in the eyes of all Europe by his firmness and his courage. With the history of the insurrection the marquis appears to have been little acquainted, and still less so with all the circumstances of the preceding conspiracies; he dwells cursorily on these subjects, and is content to take for granted all that was related to him in the immediate atmosphere of the imperial court. But he relates at some length his personal conversation with the emperor, on the conduct and feelings of the latter on that eventful day.

Now the behaviour of Nicholas on this occasion is the subject on which he is said to be most accessible to flattery, and we may therefore readily imagine it to be the one on which he is most generally flattered. It is cited both by his admirers and his detractors, and not, perhaps, inaptly by either, as he found here the opportunity of displaying the most salient features of his character—both good and bad. It will be left to the reader, at the conclusion of the eventful narrative which the author is about to commence, to appreciate

which quality predominates, but he may not deem an inapt introduction to it, the quotation of this dialogue between the emperor and the traveller.

"What you are about to read," says the letter, "was told me, a few days since, by the emperor himself. If I have not related this conversation in my last letter, it is because papers containing such details cannot be entrusted to the Russian post-office, nor even to any traveller.

"On the day that Nicholas ascended the throne, a rebellion broke out among the guards. On the first tidings of the revolt of the troops, the emperor and the empress went down stairs *alone* to their chapel, and falling upon their knees on the steps of the altar, swore to each other, before God, to die as sovereigns if they could not quell the mutiny.

"The emperor judged that the affair was serious, for he had just been informed that the archbishop had already attempted in vain to appease the soldiers. In Russia, when the religious authority proves ineffective, the disorder is formidable.

"After making the sign of the cross, the emperor set out to quash the rebellion by his mere presence, and by the calm energy of his countenance. He related this scene to me himself, in terms more modest than I am about to use. Unluckily I have forgotten the first part of his account, because at the outset I was somewhat uneasy at the unexpected turn which our conversation was taking. I shall therefore take it up at the moment where my recollection of it commences.

" 'Sire, your majesty derived your energy from the true source.'

" 'I knew not what I was going to do or say; I was inspired.'

“‘To have such inspirations, one must deserve them.’

“‘I did nothing extraordinary. I said to the soldiers, Return to your ranks; and on passing the regiment, I cried, On your knees! They all obeyed. What made me strong was, that the moment before I had resigned myself to death. I am thankful for the success—I am not proud of it, for it was not owing to any merit of mine.’

“Such were the noble expressions used by the emperor in relating to me this contemporary tragedy.

“You may thence judge of the interest of the subjects touched upon in his conversations with the foreigners whom he condescends to honour with his notice; there is a wide difference between such conversations and the common-places of the court. You may hence infer what kind of power he exercises over us, as well as over his people and his family. He is the Louis XIV. of the Slavonians.

“Eye-witnesses have assured me that he seemed to enlarge at every step he took while advancing towards the mutineers. From being taciturn, melancholy, and attentive to trifles, as he had been in his youth, he became a hero the moment he was a sovereign. It is the contrary with most princes, who promise more than they fulfil.

“This is so perfectly true on his part, that the throne is for him what the stage is for a good actor. His attitude before the rebel guards was so imposing, I am told, that one of the conspirators approached him four times, with the intention of killing him while haranguing the troops, but the wretch’s courage failed, like that of the Cimbrian in the case of Marius. Well-informed persons have attributed this mutiny to the influence

of the secret societies which, it is said, have been at work in Russia since the campaigns of the allies in France, and the frequent visits of Russian officers to Germany.

"I repeat to you what I hear said; they are obscure facts, and it is impossible for me to verify them.

"The conspirators had recourse to a ridiculous falsehood, to excite the army to revolt. They circulated a report that Nicholas was usurping the crown, to the prejudice of his brother Constantine, who, they said, was on his way to Petersburg, to defend his rights by force of arms. In order to decide the revolvers to shout under the windows of the palace, 'The constitution for ever!' the ringleaders had persuaded them that constitution was the name of Constantine's wife, their supposed empress. You see that at bottom it was an idea of duty which actuated the soldiers, since it was only by a trick that they were to be drawn into rebellion.

"The fact is, that Constantine refused the throne from nothing but weakness; he was afraid of being poisoned; therein consisted his philosophy. God knows, and perhaps some men know too, whether his abdication saved him from the danger which he thought to avoid.

"Thus it was in the interest of legitimacy, that the deluded soldiers revolted against their legitimate sovereign.

"It was remarked that the whole time the emperor was in front of the troops, he was so calm that he did not once urge his horse into a gallop, but he was extremely pale. He made trial of his power, and the

success of that trial ensured him the obedience of his nation.

“Such a man cannot be judged by the standard applied to ordinary persons. His solemn and authoritative voice, his magnetic eye stedfastly resting on the object which attracts it, but frequently rendered cold and fixed, from the habit of repressing his passions more than dissembling his thoughts, for he is frank ; his superb forehead, his features, partaking of the Apollo and the Jupiter, his imposing, imperious, unchanging physiognomy ; his face, more noble than mild, more monumental than human ; all these exercise a sovereign power over every one who approaches his person. He becomes the arbiter of the will of others, because they see that he is master of his own will.

“I subjoin what I recollect further of our conversation.

“‘After quelling the mutiny, sire, your majesty must have returned to the palace in a very different disposition from that in which you left it ; for you ensured, with the throne, the admiration of the world and the sympathy of all elevated minds.’

“‘I did not think so ; people have praised what I then did a great deal too much.’

“The emperor did not tell me that on his return to his consort, he found her attacked by a shaking of the head, a nervous complaint which she has never since entirely got the better of. This convulsion is scarcely perceptible, neither is it, indeed, at all, on those days when the empress is calm and in good health ; but whenever she suffers, morally or physically, the disorder returns, and becomes worse. This noble woman

must have had a hard struggle against the anxieties that beset her, while her husband was so daringly exposing himself to the weapons of the assassins. When he came back, as soon as she saw him, she embraced him without speaking. The emperor, after cheering her, felt a faintness in his turn: again becoming man for a moment, he threw himself into the arms of one of his most faithful servants, who happened to be present at this scene, and exclaimed, 'What a beginning of a reign!'

"I shall publish these particulars; it is right that they should be made known, to teach obscure men to be less envious of the fortune of the great."

It is unquestionable that the resolute firmness, the energetic activity, which the Emperor Nicholas displayed, saved not only his absolute crown, but his life. Uncertain as he was what mines might explode beneath his footsteps, he disdained all compromise, and boldly cast the die for unlimited power or utter ruin.

On the other hand, in the face of his army, this man, who for years has never quitted his uniform, who idolizes all that is martial, who looks in stature and in port a Cœur-de-Lion, as soon as his faithful force began to act, retired so far from the scene of action as to place himself in individual safety,—thus affording a spectacle of moral courage and firmness, and physical timidity, not inseparable, though seldom united. From this day's behaviour, the emperor's friends and foes respectively deduce arguments to assert either his courage or his cowardice. The truth is, that he appears to be endowed with that species of the former which is really valuable in a leader of men; and it may be that he is deficient in that personal bravery

which is quite unconnected with the former, but which men are apt to prize, both in themselves and others, as if it were a quality less common. In this respect his character seems to have been the converse of that of Constantine, the man of physical daring, the bold rider of unbroken horses, the intrepid swordsman, and the moral coward, who was frightened out of an Imperial crown, and whose conduct on the outbreak of the Polish revolution was marked by vacillating timidity.

By a perusal of the tale we are about to unfold, the reader will perceive that the firmness of the emperor was not greater than his severity. There are to the present day several disgraced regiments in the Russian Imperial Guards and army, being those regiments which took a prominent part in the revolt. In these corps promotion is slow, and rewards are scarce, though, immediately after the suppression of the insurrection, not a man or officer remained in them.

It must here be observed (in order to shew that in this punishment vindictiveness had a greater share than policy) that the administration of the Russian army during the last and present reigns has, after the example of France, laid no little stress on those honorary marks of distinction or disgrace, which were found to act as a powerful stimulant on the military vanity of a nation so sensitive on all points of honour as the French; but which, with men of a more "matter-of-fact" temper, are almost useless, unaccompanied by certain and tangible advantages.

The principle of all extraordinary military distinctions is, undoubtedly, that of furnishing a *cheap reward to merit*, and the expediency of this plan is unques-

tionable, where those on whom it is conferred can be induced to consider it as adequate to their deserts, and to confound the shadow with the substance.

With regard to the Russian army, in which the system of orders and medals has been more fully worked out than in any other, it has entirely failed. It is true that the man with a certain number of orders, distinguishing him for length of service, and for actions of merit, may be looked upon with some envy by a brother soldier or officer of equal rank; because, according to the regulations of such orders, he stands a better chance of promotion to the next rank, with its advantages of superior pay, power, and opportunities of peculation; but the whole army, and society in general, will regard with greater respect the man who holds a rank above him, and who, instead of having five and twenty such orders on his breast, (a common occurrence in Russia,) may not boast of half a dozen. It is therefore, the military rank, with its tangible advantages, and not the honourable badge of distinction, which is valued; and all these marks of merit and good conduct sink into distinctive signs of fresh subdivisions of grade, with the drawback of being equivocal ones.

Thus, on a recent occasion, some Russian forts on the coast of Circassia were stormed by the mountaineers, as usually happens to a portion of these Russian strongholds when the winter storminess of the Black Sea interrupts communication on its waters. In one of these forts, the powder magazine was blown up; no one remained to explain how; those not killed by the explosion being carried into captivity by the mountaineers. The commander-in-

chief on the Circassian station, having this unpleasant intelligence to communicate, states in his despatch, that the fort, defended to the last, when all was lost, was blown up by a certain private, who set fire to the powder magazine. The emperor believed, or affected to believe, what there were no witnesses to contradict; and thinking this a favourable opportunity of working on the enthusiasm of the army, by an imperial ukase he decreed "that, from this time forward for ever, at muster-roll of his company, the name of the deceased should be read at the head of the list, and that the next present should reply, 'he died at such a date, in the defence of his emperor and his country.'"

In France this would have been a more flattering and envied distinction than that conferred on the heirs of La Tour d'Auvergne, who inherited from the departed hero perpetually, the title of *Premier Grenadier de France*. In Russia, when the ukase was read to two serjeants of the guard, and it was inquired what they thought of it, "Where is the use," observed one, "of reading his name on the muster-roll when the man is not there?" The reply of the other was, "Poor fellow! I dare say he thought some day to get back to his village; but he will be kept in the ranks even after he is dead."

In the disgraced regiments which have been alluded to, from the same ignorance of all point of honour, their disgrace has failed to give rise to the only feeling which it can be the object of the emperor to inspire; for although the whole army are sensible that these are unfavoured corps, not one man in five hundred has the remotest conception why they are so.

The account already given in the preceding pages,

contains some description of the oppressions under which the aristocratic portion of the Muscovite community labour. In those devoted to the description of the army, the reader will find more copious details, explaining how the army is a place of forced servitude for the nobility of this vast empire; whilst the facts, on the narration of which the author is about to enter, will shew that the suspicion and hatred of Nicholas are not entirely groundless, and his animosity against this class, if unworthy, is not unfounded. The following brief history of the general conspiracy of the nobility against the unlimited and ever-abused power of their tsars, will furnish a key to the feeling which the present emperor entertains against his nobles, which renders the fate of the wealthiest and proudest of his aristocracy unenviable, even when contrasted with the hard fate of the British artisan.

In the present age, amidst a thousand trifling abuses, we owe to the press that its light penetrates into every chink and corner where despotism would hide its dark deeds, and exposes them in their hideous nakedness to the gaze and execration of the world; neither the deep natural dungeon of a Siberian mine, the insidious veil of calumny, nor scarcely the secrecy of the grave, can eventually hide the truth. The author has been favoured with the perusal of a MS. from the able pen of one of the actors in the scenes he is about to describe, which in a few years will be given to the world. It is full of the minutest and most graphic particulars of transactions, so dark as few men in our favoured West could have imagined to have happened in the century in which we live, even in the midst of Central Asia. The following brief description is compiled from

such recollections as a hasty perusal of the above-named MS. enabled him to retain, corroborated by the testimony of many who were indirectly mixed up with these events.

The author must begin by observing that, although the Russian nobility were not yet reduced to the same abject condition as at present, the Russian sovereigns, since Peter I., had generally continued so far encroaching on those privileges and liberties which they had more or less practically enjoyed, as, under the reign of the late Emperor Alexander, to have almost assimilated the Russian empire to those Oriental despotisms in which no hereditary aristocracy is acknowledged, or consideration enjoyed, which is not derived from the present favour of the sovereign, and where camel-drivers and slaves rise to be ministers and favourites. Those families descended from the haughty Boyars, whose princely houses were two or three centuries ago on an equality with the now reigning Romanoffs—who even a few years ago raised regiments amongst their serfs, bearing the name of their noble proprietors—submitted with a bad grace to the gradual loss of all hereditary influence; and the aristocratic colonel, when he had won his way to considerable rank, and was obliged to receive with submission the insult of the drunken general who spat in his face, felt as intolerable an offence which he might have disregarded in a prince, when he reflected that this general was a serf, or the son of a serf, who had attained his elevation by means as ignoble as his origin. The reign of terror having ceased, as that of the insane but energetic Paul may be termed, (who fell a victim, not as it is generally believed, to his

nobility, but to a mere seraglio-revolution, of which Eastern despotisms offer us the incessant picture,) the Russian nobility, whose condition had nowise improved under his mild successor, took courage, and formed the resolution of redressing their wrongs.

During the last nine years of his reign, the throne of Alexander may have been considered as placed on the crater of a volcano. The most remarkable conspiracy which ever took place in Russia, and which, in its consequences to the destiny of the whole Sclavonian family, might have proved one of the most important which history has ever recorded, was silently gathering strength, and menacing his authority and his dynasty. It afforded the spectacle, which the prejudices of Western liberalism will be apt to consider anomalous as that of the Venetian Doge conspiring for the liberty of his subjects,—a feudal nobility plotting against the sovereign, for the freedom of their own country, and of the lands groaning under the oppression of their national power. In Russia, as in Poland, it is only, however, by this class that the advantages of liberty have been understood. It was exclusively from its bosom that, for centuries in Poland, patriotic virtues shone brilliantly forth, neutralized as they have always been by feuds, dissensions and jealousies. It is in this class that in Russia they have faintly glimmered, and partially blazed out, to be, we fear, effectually extinguished until the great day when the spirit of Western light and civilization shall overthrow the genius of darkness and despotism, and unbind the fetters of sixty millions of people—a consummation which all, who do not despair of the eventual destinies of the human race, must

look forward to with confidence, however clouded the horizon of the immediate future.

If in Spain and in Germany the aristocracy have proved a curse to the country, it is to this portion of society that Poland owes her not having been consigned to oblivion, and hopeless as well as actual slavery, like the Lettonians and Esthonians—a people for whom there is no hope of political resurrection. It is to her nobility that Russia owes the only noble effort made to redeem her population from that benumbing and demoralizing despotism which avails itself of all the arts of civilization and enlightenment to extend the spread of darkness. If partial oppression has brought to light all the most exalted virtues which history presents to our view, and the slavery which feels its degradation has engendered philanthropy and patriotism,—like the soil of the North, which, subject so long to the frost, springs into rapid and sudden productiveness to compensate its winter barrenness,—yet utter, unrelieved, and unqualified servitude, such as the peasantry of these countries have been subjected to, gives rise to none of those virtues which under another system, have manifested themselves as proudly in the humblest ranks of the people as in those more exalted.

This general debasement of the popular character, from which arguments have indeed been drawn to favour the views of oligarchists, constitutes one of the strongest proofs which could possibly be adduced, of the propriety of removing the causes of it, and shews the imperative necessity of raising its moral tone because it is so low, instead of keeping it down because it is thus far sunken.

The memorable effort to which we allude, prepared during many years of Alexander's reign, was made when the present emperor ascended the throne. It failed, because the projected revolution had to contend at its birth with a man of resolution, energy, and firmness; because, as in those conspiracies which have been inspired by the purest motives, the ambitious, the treacherous, and the cowardly, who were associated with the disinterested, the noble-spirited, and the brave, were mingled in too large a proportion; and because those who planned it had miscalculated the *spirit of the time*, and in their enthusiasm judging men rather as they wished them to be than as they were, were unwilling to estimate in its desolating reality the indifference and servility of the masses on which they hoped to work. They failed, and the rope and knout of the executioner, and exile to Siberia, rewarded the boldness of some, and the vacillation of others.

Through the veil of secrecy, and amidst the calumny and misrepresentation with which the designs and characters of the conspirators were overwhelmed,—calumnies against which every protesting voice has been silenced,—it would be as difficult to gather authentic details as if already wrapped in the mist of ages, were it not for the comparison of documents, which it would be ruin for those who furnished them to acknowledge. Without reference to these, however, according to the very admissions of the agents of authority, we can trace in the plans of these men, who have been held up to execration as regicides and assassins, and in the very rules of their secret societies, a largeness and liberality of ideas, a degree of dis-

interestedness and generosity, and a direct and practical benevolence, which shew them to have been inspired, not by ambition, but by the noblest impulses; whilst independently of these, the nationality and patriotism of their views invests their conspiracy with a character perfectly antithetical to that which (as it was intended) merely proved fatal to the *tyrant* Paul, but was not directed against autocratic tyranny. In Alexander's reign, if the weakness of this sovereign suffered all the grossest abuses of administration to oppress the country more heavily and more shamelessly than at present, he had not—at least, until the latter part of his reign—attempted to seal up the mouths of men by a system of espionage and terror, and therefore they were at least at liberty to talk about, and canvass in private, the abuses which surrounded them.

After the campaigns of 1813, 14, and 15, on the return of the Russian armies from France and Germany, the more educated and therefore intelligent portion of the officers, which principally consisted of the higher nobility, had all imbibed a due sense of their degraded position; and some, contrasting the deplorable condition of their country with that of others, through which the fortune of war had carried them, and which, in the midst of all the disorders of political revolutions, appeared comparatively so enviable, became animated with the patriotic desire of introducing a better order of things, and went far in their adoption of liberal ideas. Their opinions were speedily disseminated amongst their families; the leaven began to operate, and the whole of the nobility, who had long groaned under a consciousness of degra-

· dation, became generally inspired with the hope and confidence of overturning the oriental despotism so incompatible with their existence, and the discontent, so long subdued and sullen, began gradually to ferment into activity.

This spirit being once awakened amongst that numerous body, all that it contained of youthful ardour, of noble and disinterested feeling, was called forth; and in the same flow of enthusiasm which we shall presently see causing them to sacrifice their own interests to an abstract good, they were most forward in hazarding their lives, and braving the dangers of the contest, and therefore took the initiative as the forlorn hope of a whole class, which, from motives very different from their own, wished equally the overturn of despotic power. Different secret societies were organized; the disinterested and enthusiastic—those determined neither to submit to nor to retain the power of oppression—though few in number, as they were the first to venture on this step, gave to their institutions a tone and colouring which was far from representing the feelings of the mass of conspirators by whom they were afterwards joined,—those who wished to substitute a mere feudal oligarchy for an oppressive despotism—to remove the imperial tyranny weighing on themselves, without giving up the right of themselves exercising it over the humbler classes. There were the men whose subsequent conduct, worthy of their motives, caused them to deliberate, to hesitate, and to abandon their cause when the hour of trial came, which for nine years they had succeeded in deferring by their vacillations. The best and bravest of their number alone fell victims to their rash attempt.

The Russian government has since endeavoured to spread abroad the impression that this disaffection was partial and accidental; and on this account it publicly condemned only thirty-six of the conspirators. But nothing can prove more clearly that it had a deep root in a whole class of society, than the fact, that for nine years the government could never suppress the dangerous institutions, which, as it often received vague indications, were forming in every direction around it. When, with extreme difficulty, the government succeeded in dissolving one society, it sprang up in another form, just as Whiteboyism in Ireland has been perpetuated under a variety of names. The oppression of the pampered Russian noble produced the same results as that of the half-naked and half-famished catholic of Ireland.

The founder of the first of these secret societies, which appears to have originated in 1817, was a Colonel Pestel, who is admitted to have been a man of remarkable talent, even by his adversaries, though no pains have been spared by them to blacken and vilify his name, and to trample in the dust those ashes which they scattered to the winds so ruthlessly. He was true throughout to his colours and his cause, and appears to have been by far the most skilful and practical of the conspirators. All the rules and regulations which he proposed bear the stamp of a widely comprehensive benevolence, and of the immediate and beneficial applicability to present circumstances, which argues the work of a man who was more than a dreaming theorist. At the same time, he compiled a code of Russian jurisprudence, from which *the Emperor Nicholas, who hanged him, introduced a considerable*

portion into the Russian laws, where, according to the corrupt system which pervades their administration, of which we have endeavoured to give the reader a faint idea, they may prove as ornamental, but as useless, as the Alexander column, which rises in monolithic grandeur before his palace windows.

The name of this first society was the "Union of Salvation." It was divided into three classes, in which the two inferior bound themselves by the most solemn vows to obey blindly the commands of the superior one, called the "Boyars." It was after some time dissolved, but again reappeared under the name of "Union for the public good." The number of its members was infinitely augmented, and the object of the conspirators being to bring as large a portion of the nobility together as possible, its regulations were such as did not alarm the most timid from joining them, since its founders declared, "that their only object was the public good, which ought not to be, and they trusted was not, opposed to the views of the emperor, and that therefore their meetings and deliberations should only be held in secret, to prevent the impediments which suspicion and malevolence would inevitably throw in the way of them if publicly attempted."

The members of the "Union for the public good" bound themselves by oath, by exertion of their wealth, their talent, their influence, and at their peril, to propagate the intellectual and moral education of all classes of society, to encourage the universal spread of enlightenment, by means of the dissemination of appropriate writings, and by the establishment of Lancasterian schools. They were also to encourage

a national as well as a rational feeling amongst all classes. They were to extend as much as possible the sphere of private and public beneficence, to watch narrowly all the abuses in the numerous charitable institutions of government, and place those which they discovered incessantly under the eyes of the higher authorities. They were to carry on a merciless war against every species of speculation, but especially that of the tribunals, which they were to drag to the light, and use all their influence and interest to get punished ; whilst they should employ the same means to reward by advancement the integrity of public functionaries, and subscribe to offer them pecuniary compensation for the diminution which honesty would occasion in their revenues.

Although the members of this society bound themselves to forward all these objects as much as lay in their power, they were to devote themselves more especially to the one for which it was judged that their position in society, their disposition, or their wealth best fitted them, and they were all to seek for and accept such offices as might favour their views. A certain number of them were also selected who were to discuss all questions of political interest and economy.

The good done by this society was very great, although much interest was not taken in fulfilling all these benevolent regulations by a large number of the members, who were animated by a very different spirit from the men who had framed them. In politics, the Union continued reserved and moderate. Though they had decided on the necessity of a form of government not wholly arbitrary, they were still disposed to

trust much to the liberality of Alexander, and their efforts were principally confined to endeavouring to remove him from the influence of those who were supposed to pervert the generous resolutions which his words so often conveyed. The liberality of Alexander seldom, however, shewed itself in anything but words: he was too weak and too timid ever to carry into execution, designs which he planned in moments of excitements. Brought up by the republican La Harpe, whom Catherine gave him as tutor knowing him to be such, he had, unlike most other princes, early imbibed an exceeding admiration for all liberal institutions; he had learned to consider them as a boon and a blessing, and one which he was always willing to confer, until the moment came and he found that (at home at least) it could only be at the expense of his own authority;—like those men who have a great abstract veneration for generosity, or a contempt of wealth—who have always the sentiment upon their lips, and recommend it to others—but whose natural avarice instantly dispels the illusion when called upon to part with a shilling of their own.

The timidity of Alexander was also easily excited with regard to future consequences; and Metternich, the Mephistopheles of Absolutism, as well as the emperor's own immediate counsellors, always well knew how to terrify him out of his resolutions, when, even at the expense of his rights, he was tempted to purchase that reputation for liberality, which was the glory he chiefly coveted; and it is thus that, in his conduct, the expectations to which his words gave rise were frequently contradicted by the most arbitrary acts.

If Alexander's timidity, however, prevented him from losing sight of these counsellors, his weakness had even a worse effect than this timidity; for not content with sacrificing the measures of improvement which he had meditated, he allowed them to resort to any injustices and severities they thought proper; and thus, where he had promised his subjects bread, they too often received a stone. The perfect influence his ministers and favourites attained over him notoriously allowed them to act in direct opposition to his professed wishes and feelings. We have already seen the gloomy and cruel Aracheieff, wielding, with unrelenting severity, the power he derived from a master who could, in his conversation, discuss the rights of humanity like a philosopher, and weep over its sufferings with the benevolence of a Christian.

Kriloff, the fabulist—perhaps the first of any age or country, and, at all events, by far the most shining light of Russian literature—very happily illustrates the character of Alexander, in a fable to this effect:—The sheep (his subjects) come to the elephant, and bitterly complain of the ravages of the wolves. “How is this?” quoth the elephant to the latter. “How dare you molest the sheep, my subjects?” “Sire!” reply the wolves, “we only demand of them one skin apiece, and they appear to grudge us even that.” “Well,” says the elephant, sternly, “one skin apiece, take, then; but beware how you strip them of any more!”

Innumerable instances, which daily gave a fresh point to the fable of Kriloff, at last acquainted the conspirators with Alexander's true character. The constitution which he gave to Poland had excited

their most ardent hopes, and some of them had ventured to propose their plans to the emperor himself; he embraced them with affection, he admired and approved their plans, but finally he gave them to understand, with tears in his eyes, that society was not yet quite prepared for such a state of things. The constitution of Poland also soon proved merely nominal; a year had not elapsed before it was violated by the Russian government; and shortly after, it was utterly subverted by the dissolution of the national army, the suspension of the liberty of the press, and the despotic power entrusted to his brother Constantine and to the Russian commissary.

The Union now began to perceive that there was nothing to be seriously hoped for from this man; and it was determined to overturn the government, and put an end to a tyranny which, though the tyrant himself was mild and humane, was as oppressive as any which ever existed. After long deliberation, it was decided that this could not safely be effected without taking the life of the emperor; and a vast majority decided in favour of this measure, as well as on the establishment of a republican form of government.

But a republic was understood in a very different way by the different conspirators. The far greater number, as it has been already observed, whilst desirous of overturning the authority which pressed so heavily on them, were unwilling to abandon a tittle of that which they themselves exercised; and the ideas which their leaders entertained of abolishing the servitude of their slaves, and of forming a mixed republic, in which all classes should be represented, was so indignantly repulsed by the majority, that much

dissension ensued. When divided, the conspirators became alarmed at their own rashness, and the founders of the Union affected to dissolve it, and to annul all their resolutions.

Having thus got rid of the most timid of their number, Pestel reorganized the society under another name: the institution assumed more of a masonic form; the conspirators were divided into different classes, and were promoted from one to the other, so that the secrets of this body were entrusted only to those of approved fidelity.

There are two remarkable features in the history of this conspiracy: the one is, that during nine years the conspirators were never betrayed by any fully initiated member; the other is the fact, that during the course of its proceedings the Union discovered the existence of three other independent and unconnected societies, all having in view a similar object; that of the "Russian Knights," who professed a knight-errantry against all abuses; that of the "Society for the Independence of Poland;" and that of the "United Slavonians,"* composed of young enthusiasts, who had conceived the idea of uniting the whole of the Slavonic race in one federative republic of independent states, under the names of Russia, Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Dalmatia, and Transylvania. The Slavonic population of all these countries amounts collectively to upwards of 70,000,000† of

* This same idea, inspired into the Slavonic populations beyond, by the Russian cabinet to further its ambitious views, has become anti-Russian in its tendency, and is recently making rapid progress.

† According to some calculations, upwards of 80,000,000, exclusive of the Slavonians in Turkey, the whole Slavonic family in Europe being estimated at from 85 to 100 millions.

inhabitants, all speaking a common language, distinguished only by dialectic differences no greater than are found in the language of many united and independent people. These societies, like small streams pouring into a large river, all united with Pestel's original Union, whose spirit outlived many transigrations of form, and which grew powerful and menacing, notwithstanding the heterogeneous materials which constantly crept into it.

CHAPTER X.

CONSPIRACY OF THE RUSSIAN NOBILITY, AND REVOLT OF
THE 26TH OF DECEMBER, 1825.

THE great Union was now divided into a northern and southern department, and each of these again into a number of subdivisions, and all the various elements which composed it concurring in the same immediate object, yet as widely dissentient as ever in their ulterior views, it was impossible that, under these circumstances, some jealousy and distrust should not arise. The members of this powerful association appear to have consisted of three very distinct classes of men. The first, the least numerous, but the most active, and the one that gave its own tone to all the proceedings of all these secret societies, was composed principally of young men, acting under the most generous and disinterested convictions; they wished to raise the whole of the Russian nation to the same social station as the inhabitants of the most favoured

lands, and to procure for all the Slavonic nations civil and religious liberty and toleration in the widest signification of the term, and to an extent which hitherto has not yet anywhere proved practicable, whatever it may hereafter.

The association consisted mostly of men belonging to the higher aristocracy, possessed of large fortunes, which most of them proposed sacrificing, by giving freedom to all their serfs, the only source of their revenues; and there appeared to reign a noble emulation amongst them, in their endeavours to divest their proceedings of any shadow of personal ambition. They were republicans and democrats, but men whose peculiar position proved the sincerity of their opinions, and gave no room to the suspicion which always involuntarily obtrudes, of the motives of those levellers who, in the process which they propose of levelling all classes, will rather bring down others to their own standard than allow themselves to descend.

Pestel, the most influential leader of the whole society, was the soul of this ultra party, which comprised the men of art and action, and though neither distinguished himself by family or by fortune, he was looked up to by all, on account of his energy and his talents. The three brothers Bestoujeffs, two of the Mouravieffs, Bestoujeff-Rumin and Mouravieff-Apostol, Batenkoff, Kakovski, Schveikouski, Prince Odoïefski, Wolkoff, Arbuvssoff, Volkonski (Prince Sergius), Kousmin, and Prince Stehepin Rostovski, were amongst the most ardent of the number of these disinterested patriots and reformers; their courage, when the moment of action came, was equal to the motives which inspired it; unlike the host of conspirators

who became alarmed and vacillating when the dangers of the struggle were before them, their gallantry did not belie the boldness of their words or the magnanimity of their intentions, and we find them all falling the victims of the great cause in which they had engaged.

The oligarchists constituted, however, the great majority, and included in their ranks so large a number of conspirators, that the government, after the explosion of this long-prepared conspiracy, found it impossible immediately to punish all concerned in it, the labours of the committee of inquiry having proved that there was not one noble family of note in the empire guiltless of participation in it. Although naturally this part of the report was kept as strictly private as possible, as well as many other circumstances of interest, and that so much of it as the public have been allowed to get at is interspersed with a seasoning of the foulest aspersions which the malice of policy could invent, those who choose to be at the trouble of carefully investigating such minutes even of the proceedings of the commission as are accessible, will be able to gather from the admissions of the commissioners themselves a confirmation of all the statements we have made.

There was also a portion of the members who might be rather said to approve of the proceedings of the rest than to take part in them, and who, in short, flattered themselves that, without incurring the risk of failure, they would profit by the success of their brethren; such were Michel Orloff, Mamonoff, Van Wiesen, and a numerous host besides. The activity and the genius of Pestel excited amongst this class, and amongst the oligarchists, some jealousy and apprehension, and

they succeeded in inspiring with their suspicions even many of the ultras of their party. Pestel was busily occupied in the south, and one of the Mouravieffs had been appointed president of the northern circle, when, on the plea of checking the ambitious views of Pestel, they elected the Princes Troubetskoi and Obolenski jointly to the presidency with him.

Prince Troubetskoi, who represented the oligarchical and the passive division of the conspirators, and who was at last made Dictator, though raised up avowedly to check the ambition of Pestel, was himself a man ambitious as he was vain; but he was endowed with qualifications which turned upon him the eyes of the majority whose opinions he represented, and gained him their confidence—amongst other qualities, with that sort of courage which leads a man fearlessly into dangers, and abandons him when face to face with them, but which, until it is tried, is just as imposing as if it were genuine.

It is a singular fact, that Prince Troubetskoi, whose personal conduct so mainly influenced the issue of the insurrection which crowned this long conspiracy, that perhaps upon it hinged the life of Nicholas, and the fate of despotism in the Russian empire, was himself of a family which had competed with the house of Romanoff, and was at least as legitimately entitled to the throne; but this particular incident does not seem to have been borne in mind by the oligarchic party in its selection of him.

According to the *reports of the commission*, and the *pretended* evidence of some of the guilty parties, from 1823 to 1825, many atrocious plots were laid to murder the Emperor Alexander and all the imperial family,

which were always frustrated by some providential interposition, or abandoned very unaccountably when the moment of execution came. It would appear that this extreme measure, if proposed, was never agreed to, since there was no want of opportunities to carry it into execution, and since the very men to whom this design has been attributed were precisely those who afterwards proved their unflinching resolution. It is, on the contrary, asserted by those who dare to whisper anything on this subject, in contradiction to the dictum of authority, and is energetically maintained in the manuscript which the author has perused, that the amiable qualities which distinguished Alexander alone proved his safeguard, and that if he had been personally more of the despot, even though the tyranny of his reign had been infinitely less, he must inevitably have perished; but all the more enthusiastic of the conspirators, who would eagerly have struck down the tyrant, could not bring themselves to sacrifice the victim which they judged necessary to the destruction of the despotism. This statement is the more worthy of belief, because it agrees with the character of the class of the members of the conspiracy who proved themselves to be the only men of action engaged in it, and because it perfectly tallies with the conduct of the association, and accounts for it.

There is also connected with the progress of this conspiracy another remarkable fact already mentioned, which would go far to prove the rectitude of intention and the conscious integrity of the conspirators—viz., that before the dissolution of the first association, all the men who subsequently took the most prominent part, carried away by their conviction of the innate

sympathy of the Emperor Alexander, endeavoured to make a convert of him, and privately exposed to him their constitutional views. The emperor embraced the delegates, wept feelingly when they exposed the miseries of their country, and deplored that its condition did not yet fit it for the institutions they proposed, but promised, on his honour as a prince, on his hopes as a Christian, to put his shoulder to the wheel, to advance, as rapidly as possible, the great work. When he consulted his ministers, his practical answer, or rather theirs, was the re-establishment of the secret police.

At last, the face of affairs was changed by the death of the Emperor Alexander at Taganrok, which there is much reason to believe was occasioned by natural causes, though few would be bold enough to vouch for the fact. It is at least certain that the conspirators were guiltless of it, because it took them unprepared and scattered at inconvenient distances over the empire. The refusal of Constantine to accept of the imperial crown, and his resignation in favour of Nicholas, of whose character the Union seems to have formed a very correct estimate, obliged them to take some decisive resolution.

The Grand-Duke Nicholas, thus become emperor, was judged to be of haughty and unyielding temper, and known to be as adverse to all constitutional governments, as he has since not only shewn by his actions, but boasted himself to be in his words. In a colloquy, which Custine records in 1839, as interesting as the one previously quoted, Nicholas exclaims—

“ ‘ I can comprehend a republic—it is a plain and sincere government, or at least it can be so ; I can

comprehend absolute monarchy, since I am at the head of a similar order of things; but I have no conception of a representative monarchy. It is the government of falsehood, fraud, corruption; and rather than adopt it, I would fall back to the borders of China.'

" 'Sire, I have always considered the representative government as an inevitable compromise in certain societies, at certain periods; but, like all compromises, it resolves no question—it adjourns the difficulties.' The emperor seemed to say, proceed. I continued: 'It is a truce, signed between democracy and monarchy, under the auspices of two very low tyrants, fear and interest; and prolonged by pride of talent, which delights in loquacity, and by the popular vanity, which pays itself with words. In short, it is the aristocracy of speech substituted for that of birth, for it is the government of lawyers.'

" 'Sir, you speak with truth,' said the emperor, grasping my hand. 'I have been a representative sovereign,* and the world knows what it has cost me because I would not submit to the exigencies of that INFAMOUS government, (I am repeating literally). To buy votes, to bribe consciences, to seduce some in order to delude others,—all these means I disdained, as debasing for those who obey as well as for him who commands, and dearly have I paid for my frankness. But, God be praised, I have done for ever with that odious political machine. Never will I again be a constitutional king. It is too much my nature to say what I think for me ever to consent to reign over any nation by craft or by intrigue.'

* In Poland.

"The name of Poland, which incessantly occurred to our minds, was not mentioned in this curious conversation."

On the accession of Nicholas, the incarnation of that despotism against which the conspirators were banded, it became obvious that now, if ever, they must act. The weak and vacillating were awakened from their dreams, the resolute were called to that action they had long been impatiently awaiting; but it happened that, at this precise moment, in St. Petersburg, which became the decisive scene of action, the more determined party, besides being in the immense minority, comprised none of the more influential and talented as well as energetic of its members. Nevertheless, the northern circle was called together; but in the face of this necessity the majority of the conspirators, including Troubetskoi, displayed their pusillanimity, and proposed to abandon their designs and dissolve the association. This proposition was indignantly opposed by Batenkof, Bestoujeff, Kahovski, Obolenski, Stchepin, Arbusoff, and all the ardent portion of the party, whose eager zeal and spirit-stirring appeals so worked upon the weakness or excited the vanity of the Prince Troubetskoi, that, apparently fired with their enthusiasm, he recovered his confidence, veered round to their party, and was finally chosen Dictator in this eventful crisis—a fatal distinction both for the elected and the electors!

In the deliberations which took place on this emergency, it was agreed on all sides, that for the present the utmost change that could be effected, was the establishment of a limited monarchy in place of a despotism; but this was not the ultimate object of perhaps any of the conspirators, and all were bent on

subsequently obtaining a republican form of government, in lieu of that which they now found necessary to prepare, an ulterior transition, but the continuance of which was considered as too dangerous, in the existing condition of the peasantry and the army, even in the opinion of those who wished for a republic in which the aristocratic and popular elements should be properly balanced. To the far greater number who wished for an oligarchy it was still less agreeable. The conspirators had become by this time too well convinced, that both the army and the people would remain perfectly insensible to any appeal in favour of liberties, of which even the faintest instinct seems dead in the great mass of the Muscovites; but they imagined that they perceived in the present posture of affairs a golden opportunity, and they displayed great ingenuity in the manner in which they decided to take advantage of it.

On the news of Alexander's death, Constantine had been proclaimed, and many of the regiments of the army had already taken the oath to him. It was determined to contradict the announcement of the resignation of Constantine in favour of Nicholas, (which had never been made sufficiently public,) and, by persuading the army and the mob that Constantine was under restraint, and that Nicholas was usurping, to paralyze the march of government, and snatch the reins of it out of the emperor's hands. It was supposed that, in such an emergency, Nicholas, to secure the crown, would gladly have subscribed to the conditions which they should impose, of calling together, by a decree of the senate, deputies from all the governments of the Russian empire, for the pur-

pose of making organic changes in the constitution of the state; of inviting the Polish deputies to confirm by their concurrence the union of the two countries in a federative form; and of acknowledging the authority of a provisional government chosen by the conspirators, until the deputies of the empire should have fixed on that form of constitutional government which might be judged best adapted to the wants of the country, and until the emperor should have taken oath to it.

If the conspirators were surprised by the death of Alexander, the probable renunciation of Constantine had been both contemplated and canvassed, because, having access to the most private sources of information, they were perfectly acquainted with the existence of the document by which it had been notified to the emperor as early as 1822. It was also thought probable that Constantine, whose fickle temper was well known, on receiving the intelligence of the popular movement in his favour, would suddenly take it into his head to change a resolution which he had been persuaded into by those who knew his want of confidence in his own ungovernable temper, or perhaps rather in the perfect sanity of his intellect. And strange to say for a man subject to such accesses of brutal ferocity, it was only through the medium of his intense affection for a Polish lady, and in tenderness to her tears, he abdicated an imperial crown. In case of his being tempted, by circumstances acting on his natural instability of character, thus to verify the falsehood of the conspirators, they had decided that a sufficient number of them should adhere to Nicholas to balance the two parties, and thus enable them

to force one or other to the adoption of a constitution.

If, on the other hand, Nicholas resisted and succumbed, having the power in their own hands, they resolved, under the title of provisional government, sanctioning their authority by the name of Constantine, to call together provincial deputies, and form them into two legislative chambers; and to establish also independent provincial parliaments with similar local rights; to change the military colonies into national guards, and to place the fort of St. Petersburg in the hands of the municipality of the city. As soon as some organization had thus been given to the new government, and that it should have possessed itself of the resources and the means of power, it was in contemplation to have elected a female of the imperial family to the constitutional throne—less danger being apprehended from the ambition of a woman than from that of an emperor, who might find in the ranks of the army tools always willing and able to overturn a state of things which did not rest on the broad basis of the popular opinion. These projectors seem to have forgotten that they might possibly have fallen on a Catherine.

It was also proposed to proclaim the eldest son of Nicholas, as, during a long regency, time would be afforded so far to consolidate the new form of government, that when he became of an age to attempt anything against it, the young constitution would have been found to have acquired consistency to resist before the young sovereign had gained strength to overturn it. Nothing it would appear was, however, finally decided upon as to their future course by the members of the Union, who were only unanimous in

their approbation of the immediate steps to which they should resort, to wrest, before it was too late, the absolute power from the hands of Nicholas ; whose conduct, if it has since justified the apprehensions they entertained regarding his future rule, may, it must also be admitted, has been, in some measure, influenced by their own.

On the 26th, (or the 14th, old style,) of December, 1825, it was known that the oath of fidelity to the new emperor would be administered to the troops and to the authorities, and that day was fixed for the outbreak of the revolution in St. Petersburg. The Dictator, Prince Troubetskoi, having under his orders Yakoubovitch and Colonel Boulatof, was to take the command of the insurrection, and to appear for that purpose, with all the influential unionists, on the Isaac's Plain, whither all the conspirators who had gained over their regiments should repair with them.

When the eventful morning dawned, no sooner were the troops ordered under arms by their colonels to take the oath of allegiance to the Emperor Nicholas, than they were addressed by such of the conspirators as served in their ranks, and told "that Nicholas was usurping, and their legitimate emperor in irons." The marines of the guard wavered, and at the command of their general laid hands on those who harangued them ; but the presence of mind and eloquence of the brothers Bestoujeff, turned the tide in their favour, and the whole battalion followed them. The regiment of Finland also declared for Constantine ; the grenadiers of the guard were also gained over, and a part of the regiment of Moscow immediately declared itself as soon as the two Bestoujeffs and Prince Stephen

Rostovski harangued them. But here the alarm had already been given. Generals Friedrichs, Schenschin, and other officers of high rank, had gathered round them the grenadier company, with the standard of the regiment, and exhorted the troops to obedience. All who did not hesitate seemed disposed to obey, but the Bestoujeffs and Prince Rostovski, without a moment's hesitation, pushing aside the bayonets directed against them, dashed sword in hand into the midst of the grenadiers.

After a momentary but gallant conflict, they possessed themselves of the standard, and then all resistance vanished; the two generals, the colonel, and several soldiers, were lying bleeding on the earth—the conspirators unharmed. The regiment no longer hesitated, but followed with loud acclamations these daring leaders, who led them straight to the Isaac's Plain. As they marched along they were joined by a few of the conspirators in plain clothes, but armed to the teeth, although concealing their weapons under their clothes. On reaching the Isaac's Plain, however, they found that none of their confederates were awaiting them, and during the whole day they saw nothing of the chiefs, whose province it was to direct the insurrection which had been so successfully begun, and to whom they looked forward as the central authority which was to rally and unite all the isolated efforts which were to have been made simultaneously with their own. Of all those who had spoken so enthusiastically the night before, not one appeared to second the movement; they had all fled the danger. As for the Prince Troubetskoi, the Dictator, who should have directed all—whilst the revolted regiments were

hailing Constantine and the constitution, *on the spot and at the hour at which he had given their leaders rendezvous, he was taking the oath to Nicholas.*

The emperor was suddenly informed of the revolt of his troops, and as defection after defection was announced to him, his position was truly alarming, because it was impossible to tell the extent of the danger, or to know who was for him, and who against him. From the time that he made up his mind to face the danger, his coolness and presence of mind, however, never deserted him. Those regiments which had unhesitatingly taken the oath to him, were formed either before the Winter Palace, or in the court-yard of that spacious edifice; and here he addressed them, and pointing out his empress and his children from the balcony, made them renew their oath of fidelity to himself, and swear to protect his family. He then marched against the rebels. It must be remembered, however, that the rebels were by this time ascertained to be only thirteen hundred in number, and that his faithful troops amounted to thirteen thousand.

The revolted regiments were formed in line with their backs to the Senate House. They were passive and irresolute, because the conspirators, who every instant expected the appearance of their confederates, —devoid of all intelligence of what was passing, and having no ulterior orders,—knew not how to act. The emperor sent to summon them to take the oath of allegiance, but they answered by fierce cries of "Constantine and the Constitution!" Count Miloradovitch, the favourite veteran of the army, whose breast, covered with decorations, had been exposed in every battle in which the oldest Russian soldiers had

taken part, now rode up to the mutineers, but he was not allowed to harangue them; a voice reminded the soldiers of a circumstance already narrated, in which he had deceived them; loud cries arose of "Where are our comrades walled up in the fortress?" At being reproached with perhaps the only act of treachery he had ever committed, Miloradovitch appeared to feel his courage fail him for the first time; but he made another effort to obtain a hearing, when he was cut short by a pistol bullet, and immediately riddled by the bayonets of the exasperated soldiers.

It has been said that Kahovski fired the shot which struck him from his horse; but this is very uncertain, although beyond all doubt he killed with his own hand the Colonel Surler, who came on an errand similar to that of Miloradovitch. The emperor, now carefully retiring out of shot, ordered the regiments which had embraced his cause to open their fire, but some refused, and others obeyed but imperfectly, firing over the heads of the rebels.

In the meanwhile, however, Major-General Bendorff, who had been just in time to secure twelve pieces of cannon at the barracks, where the conspirators arrived too late, brought it to the Isaac's Plain at an opportune moment; and his conduct on this day is said to have been the dawn of his fortune, and to have given rise to the confidence which the emperor reposes in him. The artillery was immediately ordered to fire on the rebellious, but still quiescent masses; for the conspirators and their soldiers were yet anxiously awaiting Troubetskoi, Boulatof, and the chiefs of the movement. Then followed a scene of merciless and cruel massacre, when round

after round of grape and canister were poured from a murderous distance on men who had ceased to resist.

Before evening the mutineers were cut down, disarmed, and secured, and those conspirators who had taken an active part in the insurrection were either slain, taken, or tracked in the retreats where they sought in vain for concealment. Whilst this was taking place in the North, in the centre of the empire, Pestel was arrested at Moscow. Too suddenly surprised to be able to make any resistance, when overpowered, he evinced no anxiety for anything but his "*Rouskaya pravda*," or his great work on Russian jurisprudence. His equanimity never deserted him, even to the gallows on which he suffered, and he died with sealed lips, though tortures are said to have been employed to wring from him his secret. The conspirators, instead of any immediate attempt to deliver him, were only aroused to make a tardy and ineffectual effort after the news of the failure of the insurrection in St. Petersburg had taken place.

In the south of Russia the brothers Mouravieff had been arrested at the same time that Pestel had been secured in Moscow; but they were speedily delivered by Bestoujeff and Kouzmin, and raising boldly the standard of revolt, they entered the town of Vasilkof. Having gained over a regiment of the line, they then marched forward to occupy a position from whence they could most speedily effect a junction with such troops as they hoped their confederates would succeed in seducing. The enthusiastic Bestoujeff made a vain appeal to the reason and religious feeling of his soldiers. After mass, the chaplain read to them the

Russian Republican Catechism, of which Bestoujeff was the author, and in which he proved by numerous quotations from the word of God, that all men were equal in the eyes of the Almighty, and that nothing could be more offensive in his sight than the enslavement of man by his fellows. But they remained careless and indifferent to all the ingenious comments which were made upon this text, as involving a subject on which they neither knew nor wished to know anything. To move and animate them it was found necessary to promise them double pay, and to allude to the rights of Constantine, which immediately aroused an interest in them which they seemed incapable of feeling in their own. To the cry Constantine and Constitution they marched forward, however, under the command of the elder Mouravieff. But in the south, as in the north, the great mass of conspirators sought shelter from the storm which they had helped to raise, and pusillanimously held back; whilst the insurgents who were yet too feeble to attempt anything were overtaken on their march to Telessie by the vanguard of General Geismar's forces.

The conspirators, conscious that everything depended on the first bold onset, without hesitation attacked the enemy; the Mouravieffs charged right upon the Imperial artillery, but the elder brother was desperately wounded by a grape-shot, and Hippolyte, the younger, fell dead at his side, by the first discharge. Their soldiers fled: in vain the devoted leaders strove to rally them. Mouravieff and Bestoujeff, who were wounded, Mathew, the second brother of the former, and Kouzmin, were given up by their own men to the victorious troops. Kouzmin, unwilling to survive the

wreck of their hopes, succeeded in snatching a pistol from one of their guardians, and discharging it at his own head, splashed the Mouravieffs with his blood and brains. Thus terminated this vast conspiracy. In the north, in the centre, and in the south, the same courage was displayed by the few who had engaged in it from patriotic motives, the same pusillanimity exhibited by the majority, whose narrow and contracted views were bounded by mere interests of caste, or that unalloyed self-interest which is the immediate root of it.

Amongst those of the conspirators who had taken a prominent part, either in the Union, or in the unsuccessful attempt directed against the Government, the least to be pitied were those who perished by the hands of the executioners. Though they were made ignominiously to expiate their failure on the gallows, and though calumny and falsehood pursued them beyond the grave, their sufferings, at least, were soon over; and some day, when the colossal system of iniquity which they made a vain, but glorious effort to overturn, shall have become so unbearable to those whom it oppresses, as to lead to its destruction, their country, and all those over which the tyranny shall afterwards have spread its withering influence, will learn to regard with veneration the graves of those who, however visionary their ideas, devoted themselves to the cause of their fellow men, and to look with admiration on the spirit of the generous few which amidst the universal selfishness and corruption of a race of slaves, rose up like the phosphoric bubbles which ascend from the rank and sweltering marsh, as bright, as transient, as unlike the slough from which

they have sprung, and alas ! that it must be added, as useless.

If the admiration of posterity be indifferent to the dead, let us hope that the anticipation of it may, at least, have proved a consolation to these *dying enthusiasts*. Those who perished publicly were few in number, but very many disappeared from the light to which their eyes were probably soon closed for ever. The police do not acknowledge to know anything about them, although visibly arrested by its agents ; no one dares press any questions regarding their fate, nor would they obtain any satisfactory answers if they did.

The Russian despotism is pushed so far that there are agents of authority who are anxious to save the presiding power even the remorse of cruelties and crimes, and those who have rendered themselves obnoxious to it, disappear from before its eyes, or die in their prisons, just as an emperor or *his minister could have wished*, and yet without his having ordered it. In addition to this, Nicholas vindictively superintended the trials, which lasted many months, and personally interrogated not only the prisoners, but their nearest relatives, who often vainly attempted to secure his clemency for the guilty by the frankness of their depositions. One hundred and twenty of the conspirators were condemned by the public commission, of whom five were hanged, and one hundred and fifteen sent to Siberia. Their fate is known to have been horrible, but at least it is certain.

Amongst these was the Prince Troubetskoi, the craven Dictator, who, whilst his brethren (Pestel, Releieff, Bestoujeff-Roumin, Kahovski, and Mouravieff)

were striking the blow, and whilst the imperial crown hung by a thread, had penetrated amidst the staff of the Emperor Nicholas, were he demanded to be allowed to take the oath of fidelity to him. He remained amongst them — the hare seeking refuge amongst the hounds—for many hours; the livid paleness of his countenance denoting his guilt, whilst his incoherent protestations of attachment to the new sovereign rendered it still more contemptible, and were only interrupted by his fits of fainting as the discharges of cannon and musketry broke upon his ear. He nevertheless escaped to the house of the Austrian minister, whence the next day the wretched man was dragged before the Emperor.

Boulatof, who was to have been second in command, as soon as the insurrection was proclaimed, ran to betray all his associates, beating his breast like the penitents in the churches, and throwing himself on the Emperor's mercy. Prince Odoievski sought refuge in the house of his uncle, the senator Lanskoi, half frozen, after spending a Russian December's night concealed under the arch of a bridge: he was instantly betrayed by this worthy relative. Troubetskoi was exiled to Siberia for life, with a chain on his leg, his head shaved, a party-coloured dress, and deprived, not only of his title, but even of his name, for he is now only distinguished by a number, being civilly dead in the eye of the law. Coarse food, hard labour, and stripes, without a prospect of relief, save in the grave, have succeeded the luxurious life of the wealthy magnate, and the aspiring hopes of the dictator. Sixteen years, a large portion of which he spent labouring in a mine, which have elapsed since

he departed on his weary journey, have brought no amelioration in his condition, excepting that for which he is indebted to the heroism and attachment of his wife*—a wife whom he had neglected and ill-treated in the hours of his prosperity—who long after, by dint of supplications, of tears, and entreaties, wrung from Nicholas the permission to share the exile of her husband, but on these hard conditions, that if she went she should only retain of her immense fortune a sum equivalent to about 250*l.* per annum, and that she should not be allowed to return. This noble woman sacrificed both her fortune and her liberty unhesitatingly, and fulfilling the noblest mission of her sex, came like a ministering angel to soothe the anguish of the captive's exile. She has since written, and appears resigned to her gloomy fate. The princess is driven to perform the most menial offices; for the pittance which she has been allowed to retain is said to be all swallowed up in bribing the guardians of her husband into humanity. It is a remarkable fact that the princess, who, up to this period, had been childless, has been, since sharing her husband's exile, blessed, or rather cursed, with a large family; we say cursed, for what must be the anguish of this noble woman to know that she has given birth to slaves, the emperor having sternly refused her prayer to be even allowed to educate them, or to raise them from the class of serfs—thus visiting the sins of the father on those unborn when he offended. Prince Troubetskoi is considered as a monument of the emperor's clemency, and it is admitted that he has not been so severely treated as many of his more *perverse* confederates.

* Princess Troubetskoi was a daughter of the Countess de Laval.

Let us hear the Marquisde Custine's account of the answer given by Nicholas to the petition of the heroic mother, not for pardon, but only for some alleviation to the miseries which those dear to her were enduring. The application was made by a relative worthy of her blood, on the receipt of a letter from the illustrious exile; on this letter the author was consulted. He thus states the soul-stirring case:—

“The prince had a wife allied by birth to the most distinguished families in the country. No persuasions could divert the princess from following her husband to the tomb. ‘It is my duty,’ said she; ‘I will perform it; no human power has a right to separate a wife from her husband; I am determined to share the lot of mine.’ This noble-minded woman obtained the favour of being buried alive with her husband. What surprises me, since I have been in Russia, and had a glimpse of the spirit which presides over this government, is that, from a relic of shame, it has been thought right to respect this act of conjugal attachment for the space of fourteen years. To favour patriotic heroism is a matter of course; advantage is derived from it; but to tolerate a sublime virtue that does not harmonize with the political views of the sovereign is an oversight with which the government must reproach itself. No doubt, it feared the friends of the Troubetskoi; an aristocracy, how enervated soever it may be, always retains a shadow of independence, and this shadow is sufficient to overcast despotism.

“Thus then the fear of exasperating preponderant families induced the exercise of a certain sort of prudence or clemency. The princess set out with her husband, the convict, and, what is still more marvel-

lous, she reached the journey's end—a prodigious journey, and which of itself was a terrible punishment. These journeys, you know, are performed in a telega, a small uncovered cart, without springs, that rolls for hundreds—nay, thousands—of leagues over boles of trees, which break the vehicle and bruise the riders. The unfortunate lady endured this fatigue and many others after it; I have a glimpse of her sufferings, her privations, but I cannot describe them; the details are wanting, and I will not have recourse to imagination; in this history truth is sacred to me.

“The effort will appear the more heroic, when you are told that, up to the period of the catastrophe, this couple had lived very coldly together. But does not impassioned devotedness supply the place of love? is it not love itself? Love has several sources, and the sacrifice is the more abundant. They had had no children in Petersburg; they have had five in Siberia.

“The exiles have lived for fourteen years, by the side, I may say, of the mines of the Ural; for the arms of such a labourer as the prince can forward but little the material operations of the pick-axe. * * * He is there because he is to be there—that is all: he is a convict, this is enough. You shall see presently to what this condition dooms a man *and his children!*

“There are not wanting good Russians in Petersburg, and I have met with them, who consider the condition of persons condemned to the mines as very tolerable, and complain that *modern phrase-makers* exaggerate the sufferings of the conspirators of the Ural. They allowed, indeed, that no money can be transmitted to them, but their relatives have permission to

send them necessities; thus they are supplied with clothing and provisions. Provisions! * * * Few are the articles of food that can travel those fabulous distances in such a climate without damage. But, no matter what are the privations, the sufferings of the convicts, staunch patriots approve without restriction of the bagno of Russian invention. These courtier executioners always think the punishment too mild for the crime.

“Be the delights of Siberia what they may, the health of the Princess Troubetskoi is impaired by her residence at the mines. It is difficult to conceive how a woman, accustomed to the luxury of high life in a voluptuous country, could so long have endured the hardships of all kinds to which she has submitted from choice. She resolved to live—she has lived; she has become pregnant; she has given birth to children, and brought them up, where the length and the intense cold of winter appear to us to be hostile to life. The thermometer there descends every year to between 36 and 40 degrees; this temperature alone would suffice to destroy the human race; but this sublime woman has sufferings of a very different kind.

“After seven years’ exile, when she saw her children growing up, she thought it her duty to write to her family, requesting that the emperor might be most humbly petitioned to permit them to be sent to Petersburg, or to some other large city, in order that they might there receive a suitable education. This petition was carried to the feet of the tsar, but the worthy successor of the Ivans and of Peter I., replied, that these children of a convict-slave, (*galerien*), slaves themselves, needed no education.

“After this answer, the family, the mother, the convict, kept silence for seven more long years. Humbled humanity, honour, Christian charity, religion, protested alone, but in deep silence; not a voice was raised to exclaim against such *justice*.

“Now, however, an aggravation of wretchedness has just forced a last cry from the depth of this abyss. The prince has completed the time of servitude, and the liberated exiles are, it is said, condemned to form, themselves and their young family, a colony in one of the remotest corners of the desert. The place of their new residence, *purposely* chosen by the emperor himself, is so wild, that the name of the spot is not even yet marked on the maps of the Russian staff, the most accurate and the most minute geographical maps that exist.

“You may imagine that the condition of the princess (I mention her alone) is more deplorable, since she has been permitted to inhabit this wilderness:—take notice that, in this language of the oppressed, interpreted by the oppressor, permissions are obligatory. In the mines she kept herself warm under ground; there, at least, this mother had companions in misfortune, mute comforters, witnesses of her heroism; there her eyes encountered those of human beings, who respectfully contemplated and deplored her *inglorious* martyrdom—a circumstance which rendered it more sublime; there existed hearts which throbbed at the sight of her; in short, without even having need to speak, she felt herself in society. Let governments do their worst, pity will shew itself wherever there are men.

“But how soften bears, pierce impenetrable woods, melt everlasting ice, cross the spongy waste of a bound-

less marsh, preserve herself from deadly cold in a cabin? how, in short, subsist alone with her husband and five children, a hundred leagues, perchance more, from any human habitation, excepting, perhaps, that of the overseer of the colonists? for this it is that is called colonizing in Siberia. * * *

"Now this father and this mother, destitute of all succour, without physical strength to encounter so many misfortunes, exhausted by the deceitful hopes of the past, by anxiety about the future, lost in their wilderness, crushed in the pride of their wretchedness, which ceases even to have any witnesses, punished in their children, whose innocence serves only to aggravate the misery of the parents,—these martyrs of a ferocious policy know not how to support themselves and their family. No matter whether these little convicts (*forçats*) by birth, these imperial parias, are distinguished by numbers instead of names; if they no longer have a country, if they have no place in the state, still nature has given them bodies which must be fed and clothed. Can a mother, whatever dignity, whatever elevation of soul she may possess, behold her offspring perish without soliciting mercy? No; she humbles herself.

"In this extreme destitution she sees only their misery. The father, his heart broken by suffering, allows her to act according to her inspiration; in short, forgiving—for to solicit mercy is to forgive—with heroic generosity, the cruelty of the first refusal, the princess writes a second letter from the recess of her hut. This letter is addressed to her family, but destined for the emperor. It was, in fact, putting herself under the feet of her enemy; it was overlooking

what she owed to herself—but who would not absolve her, the victim of such misfortunes ! * * *

“The letter of the princess reaches its destination ; the emperor has read it ; and it was to communicate this letter to me that I was prevented from departing. I do not regret the delay. Never did I read anything more simple, or more affecting. Actions like hers may well dispense with words. She uses her privilege of a heroine ; she is laconic even in begging the life of her children. It is in few lines that she pictures her situation, without declamation, without complaints. She has placed herself above all eloquence ; the bare facts speak for her ; she concludes by imploring the sole favour of being permitted to live within reach of an apothecary, that, as she says, she may be able to procure medicine for her children when they are ill. To her the environs of Tobolsk, Irkutsk, or Orenburg, would appear a paradise. In the last words of her letter, she no longer addresses the emperor ; she forgets everything but her husband, and it is to the thought of the heart that she replies with a delicacy and a dignity which would deserve oblivion of the most execrable crime : and she is innocent ! And the sovereign whom she is addressing is omnipotent, and has no other judge of his actions but God ! ‘I am very miserable,’ says she ; ‘yet, were the thing to do again, I would do as I have done.’

“In the family of this lady there was one person courageous enough—and whoever is acquainted with Russia will duly appreciate this act of piety—to carry this letter to the emperor, and even to support with an humble supplication the request of a disgraced relative. She is not to be mentioned before the

sovereign but with the same terror as if she were a criminal, yet before any other man but the Emperor of Russia, one might well boast of being allied to that noble victim of conjugal duty. What do I say? In her conduct there is much more than the duty of a wife,—there is the enthusiasm of an angel.

“All this heroism must nevertheless be accounted for nothing: the speaker is forced to tremble, to solicit pardon for a virtue that forces the gates of heaven; while all husbands, all sons, all women, all human beings, ought to raise a monument in honour of this model of wives.

“Well, after a vengeance of fourteen years, wreaked without intermission, but not glutted, this woman, ennobled by so many heroic sufferings, obtained from the Emperor Nicholas no other answer but the words which you shall read, and which I received from the very lips of a person to whom the courageous relative of the victim had just repeated them: ‘I am astonished that any one dares to speak to me again [twice in fifteen years] about a family, the head of which conspired against me.’”

Such was the termination of the only conspiracy made by any class of the Russian nation; all others, since the time of Peter, having been mere Oriental seraglio-revolutions. It was planned and carried into execution under auspices more favourable than it can be supposed will ever exist again, until time shall have raised up a fresh class, or inspired those which are now utterly inert, with a consciousness of their degraded situation, and the wish to ameliorate it. If the whole nobility, however, unanimous and organized, could not then make head against the Imperial power,

incessantly watched, daily enfeebled, and still further demoralized, it is idle to suppose that they will succeed in doing so now or at any future time; and the prejudice entertained in Western Europe that the Emperors of Russia are now in any way influenced by the fear of their nobility, is just as idle as the hope that they will ever realize that supposed apprehension.

If we contrast this conspiracy with the one which placed Alexander on the throne, we may read a useful lesson on the subject. The first was an attempt at a national revolution—the overturn, which has now less chances of success than ever, of a system; the latter was a mere change of the despot—a revolution which is as likely to take place to-morrow as it was when Paul was murdered. It would almost seem as if the difference in the opinion of despotism with regard to the enormity of the sin committed *against the despot, or against the tyranny*, were visible in the respective treatment of the men who had offended against the one, or who had menaced the other; for the assassins of the father of the present emperor all died in their comfortable beds, and only the Michael Palace, in which the deed of blood was committed, seemed to have fallen seriously into disgrace with the Imperial family, being shunned by them,—some of its vast apartments abandoned as an abode for bats, the rest converted into a school for engineers, or a guard-house for soldiers.

CHAPTER XI.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN RUSSIA, AND NATIONAL CHURCH.

RUSSIA, with its government, the most complete despotism in Europe, is not unfrequently cited as a model of religious toleration. With a preponderant national church, to which its members are fanatically attached, the state, nevertheless, not only allows those of every imaginable sect to worship publicly, according to the rites and forms of their respective creeds, but wherever a sufficient congregation can be brought together by a priest or pastor of any denomination, the state assigns him a suitable salary. The only exceptions to this toleration of all sects and religions, are directed against members of the Jewish persuasion, and the Roman-catholic order of the Jesuits.*

The state makes no peculiar religion a condition of

* This persecution has recently extended to the Lutherans in the Baltic provinces, though not to the same sanguinary degree as in Poland.

eligibility to its highest offices; a Lutheran, a Greek, a Roman-catholic, or a Mahometan, may equally command the imperial armies, or sit in the imperial cabinet. Neither is this, as in France, the result of the State's indifference, because although in Russia a man may be of *any* religion, he must be of *some* religion, or at least he must *profess* to belong to some communion. No Russian authority will sign the passport which every individual not in the service must annually renew, unless that individual professes some religious creed, and neither atheism nor deism are admitted, unless the latter be veiled under some other denomination.

Without a passport no stranger can penetrate into the Russian dominions; a native living without one is considered by the law as a vagabond. In the service or the employment of government, every man must profess some specific creed or faith, whichever it may be, but once a-year he is required to bring a certificate from his own minister or priest, that he has fulfilled the religious rites which his church enjoins.

This is one side of the medal, which we will presently reverse, but meanwhile will endeavour in a few words to explain the causes in which originate this seeming toleration, and the peculiar circumstances which have rendered it as easy as politic. If ever there was a case in which the words of Louis XIV., "*L'état c'est moi*," were peculiarly applicable, it is certainly so in that of a Russian emperor. When so inclined, like Nicholas, he becomes his own prime minister, but is at all times the supreme head of the whole Russian church. He is to its communi-

cants what the Pope of Rome is to the Roman-catholic world, and being as absolute a spiritual as he is a temporal arbiter, can, without difficulty, accord exactly the degree of toleration which he judges expedient for his temporal interests. The very spirit of the Greek church, which is known to be that of the Muscovite population, affords in this respect greater facilities than any other, as the reader will subsequently find, in the brief account we propose to give of it.

As the Greek church has never been a proselytizing church, it can never have the same inducement to interfere with those of other persuasions, as if it indulged the hope, by terror, force, or such means as misguided man calls "*pious* fraud and violence," of one day inclosing them within its folds. The tacit belief of the Greek clergy in this respect, seems to be like that of the Jews, the Covenanters, and many sects still flourishing in the United Kingdom of Great Britain, that their own flock comprises the elect, the rest of the world the Gentiles—that their belonging to this chosen flock is a mark of God's especial favour, which he knows best where to bestow—a gift, in the distribution of which man's right to interfere is almost questionable.

Thus, although the Greek church leaves open, as it were, its portals, to those who are led into them by divine grace, it does not beckon in, or invite, the passer by. The imperial interests, which are called the interests of the state, have for many years past rendered the toleration of other creeds politic, because all the territorial acquisitions made since the days of Peter the Great, as well as most of those which Russian

ambition covets, are inhabited by a Catholic, Mahometan, or a Lutheran population.

Extensive and sanguinary religious persecution has not been wanting, however, when it was deemed that the ambitious views of its cabinet could thus be forwarded, as in the instance of that which was instituted on so vast a scale by the Empress Catherine, in the Polish provinces, now the scene of similar barbarities, but in these the Russian church has never had any general participation. Religious differences have been only the pretext, and the church has been made the reluctant instrument of proselytism in which it takes no interest, and of cruelties to which its fears and weakness have nominally consented.

On the other hand, the national religion, which invests the sovereign with a peculiar character of sanctity, and which devotes all the fervour of its votaries, and all the enthusiasm which it inspires, to favour his personal views, since his hand grasps the key of the whole centralized mechanism of the church, cannot fail of being the most agreeable in the sight of the emperor.

To go no further back than the present reign, we may trace the result of these conflicting feelings in the anomalous acts of the Russian government. We see it apparently viewing all religious matters in a philosophic light, and declining to interfere in questions which are the immediate concern only of the individual, so long as social order is not affected by them; recognising all religions as a powerful check upon the passions and vices of mankind, because all inculcating, if in a different degree, principles of morality, and only hostile to utter unbelief, because subversive of this powerful auxiliary of good govern-

ment. Two-thirds of the cabinet ministers, a large proportion of the generals of the Russian army, and of the immediate courtiers of the Emperor Nicholas, profess the Lutheran religion.

But at the same time no sovereign in Europe has, in certain cases, shewn greater intolerance, whether it arise from superstitious devotion, or, as it is more probable, from predilection for the faith which encourages the most profound veneration for his despotic authority. There exist at the present day, in the practice of European legislation, no penalties in the most bigoted countries, so severe against any spiritual offenders, as infallibly await any member of the Greek church turning to any other. Ruin, degradation, and exile to Siberia, stare him in the face. Nor is this all. Any Russian subject, professing another faith, may change to the Greek church, (but to no other,) or is liable to the same pains and forfeitures as if he had fallen away from the national religion.

All children born of a mixed marriage must be brought up in the Greek faith, from which the severity of the law never allows them to swerve. The Emperor Nicholas obliged his empress to abjure the Lutheran, and embrace the national religion. So he did also by his son's wife, another German princess; but the imperial children are not permitted, in any case, to depart from the creed of their fathers.

As regards the Russian clergy, who are not allowed in the remotest degree to interfere in the government of the state, the present emperor encourages the superstitious ceremonies which tend to increase the devotion of the population, but very speedily checks any independence, on their part, in the use or application of

them. For instance, it has been an imprescriptible right of the higher clergy, from time immemorial, to decide by preternatural agency that certain bones or skeletons, turned up by the plough, or discovered in any other casual manner, were the relics of apostles, saints, or holy men. Certain authorities of the church gave their sanction, and a chapel was forthwith built on the spot, and soon richly endowed by the offerings of the pious, who continued to pour from all quarters to the shrine of the saint, the novelty of which always proved lucratively attractive. A few years since, a similar providential discovery was made, and the Emperor Nicholas was duly informed of it. According to the custom on such occasions, he went to worship on the tomb, but intimated to his clergy that in future it would go hard with any one attempting to discover a saint without the imperial permission.

That it was not, however, the intention of the emperor to discourage the superstition, he proved by soon after visiting a certain monastery in the government of Minsk, which boasted of possessing the very cross on which the Redeemer of the world was crucified, whereby this fortunate community had succeeded in accumulating untold treasures. He unceremoniously borrowed the greater part of their funds, and brought the cross with him (on a pious speculation) to be exposed in Moscow to the veneration of the faithful. This relic, whole and intact, (notwithstanding the number of authentic pieces scattered through the churches in the very city to which it was brought, to say nothing of the rest of the empire, and which collected together might have sufficed to build a shed for the entire one,) when it had done duty in Moscow,

was brought to St. Petersburg, and exposed in the Kazan church, which was besieged day and night by an unceasing stream of devotees. But piety at St. Petersburg differed in this respect from piety at Moscow, that though it prostrated itself in as humble adoration, and beat its breast with as much compunction and fervour, it did not open its purse-strings. Only some fifteen thousand pounds' worth of offerings repaid the imperial ingenuity, whereas Moscow yielded ten times that amount. This took place about the beginning of 1842.

The emperor has further enacted the farce of canonising some holy man whose body was discovered in a perfect condition, but this miraculous relic falling to pieces by exposure to the air, after an ukase had given him place in the hierarchy of heaven, and being recognized as the earthly coil of a very disreputable personage, Nicholas by another ukase degraded him from his saintship and banished his bones and dust to Siberia.

There is sufficient motive in the advantage which Imperial authority derives from the maintenance of a creed which is so favourable to it, to account for the encouragement the emperor gives to its most superstitious observances, without supposing that he participates in them; but if we allow that the politician, taking advantage of one of the most powerful springs of human action, stands intellectually in a very different point of view from a blindly superstitious bigot, on the other hand, where the fanatic has begun a cruel religious persecution against those of another faith, we can find an excuse for his sanguinary errors, which become crimes when the persecution is directed

by the private animosity of the man, or the policy of the statesman.

Whatever motive may inspire the Emperor Nicholas, whether fanatic zeal, or mistaken views of interest he is the first of the Russian sovereigns who has begun a cruel and bitter persecution of other creeds; and although the evil is local, Poland and the anciently Polish provinces at this moment present to our view more revolting scenes of the interference of arbitrary power between man and his Maker than any country in Europe has offered the example of, since humanity was shocked by the sanguinary bigotry of the Spaniards. The persecution of the Roman Catholics, and the violent means by which the members of the united Greek church have been enclosed within the pale of the national church of Russia, form a startling reverse to the medal on which the genius of Muscovy is depicted hand in hand with the gentle spirit of religious toleration.

Few of our readers have not heard of the late differences between the Russian cabinet and the pope; and many may have read casual accounts in the newspapers of arbitrary means taken to force the United Greeks to embrace the Græco-Russian faith. But, like the cries of victims tortured in the depths of subterranean dungeons, the voice of wailing has come in such faint and inarticulate sounds upon the ear, as scarcely to excite attention. The means of persecution employed too in the Russian dominions, resemble those instruments of torture, terrible in their nature, but neither sharp nor bloody, which strain the nerves

and sinews, burst intestines, and dislocate bones, but leave no marks of acute violence. There is no punishment of death—there is no violence offered on the *plea* of religious difference—no foreign government can raise its voice to intercede between the persecutor and the victim, because the severity of the punishment, and its motive, are equally denied, where occasionally the voice of a solitary sufferer is carried abroad.

Thus the United Greeks formed a numerous sect, whose origin entitled them to more respect than most dissenting communities, because composed of the members of two creeds, who, instead of making the unimportance of the trifling religious differences which divided them, a cause for aggravated hate, wisely united. The persuasions to which they owe their origin, were the Greek and the Roman-catholic, which, always bearing a close resemblance on the frontier provinces of the Polish republic, and neither being followed in the strictest purity of their tenets and forms, had so nearly assimilated to each other, that they could probably only have been kept from amalgamating, by being urged to mutual persecution.

Gradually, however, as the church of Rome acquired the opportunity of attending more closely to her affairs, her superior policy and knowledge acquired thus far the ascendancy with the United Greeks, that they became in reality Roman catholics, acknowledging the jurisdiction of Rome, which wisely shut her eyes to little differences that were never obtruded on the notice of the rest of the Catholic world.

The Emperor Nicholas, whose disposition was always imperious, impatient of any obstacles to his

power and ambition, after he had quelled the Polish revolution, seized the opportunity of re-uniting the United Greeks to the church from which he assumed that they had formerly strayed.

Tired of many years of policy wasted to accomplish this object, in 1838 he caused a petition, praying for admission to the Russian church, to be carried round to the Uniate clergy—every artifice, even to false signatures, together with threats, promises, and punishments, obtained to it the sanction of 1600 names. In the beginning of 1839, an imperial order declared the incorporation of the United into the Russian church. From this moment it became a capital crime for three millions of people, who were essentially Roman catholics, to depart from a new church to which they were forcibly united.

It has been frequently observed, that the poorer a people are, with the more fervour do they cling to their faith, and the more prone are they to the most absurd superstitions which may have been engrafted upon it; as if the comparative cheerlessness of their earthly prospects made them seek eagerly for anything which they deem a ray of light beaming on them from a brighter state of existence.

The miserable condition of the Polish and the frontier serfs is proverbial; and if sometimes far happier than is supposed, it is generally even below the description which is commonly given of it. It may be imagined that such a population would not readily abandon the faith they cherished, on the strength of the Imperial ukase. The persecution of the Russian government was naturally directed against the pastors of this sect, the immense majority of whom

were disinclined to conform. Being declared to belong to the Greek church, they were at once treated as refractory members of its flock, wherever threats, menaces, and bribes, had failed to induce them to do so.

The success of this measure is surprising, unless we take into consideration the absolute futility of all resistance, and the impossibility of all public protestation or communication between the persecuted. And to this we must add the nature of the persecution which has rendered it the first successful one which history records on so large a scale. The stake, the axe, and the torture-chamber, have no terrors for the real enthusiasts of an oppressed religion, while they shrink before a persecution which invests them with no glory in their own eyes, or the estimation of their religious brethren. The recusant pastors of the United Greeks were given over to the mercies of the inquisitorial police, and legally harassed, ruined, imprisoned, accused on political grounds, and eventually punished with the plitt, and banished to Siberia.

The Roman-catholic population of those districts in which they constituted the minority, have been, and continue to be, persecuted by the same means, to drive them to embrace the Greek faith, and some indirect connexion with the late revolution is a ready pretext for the exercise of any severity.

The Emperor of Russia next attempted what no sovereign has yet succeeded in effecting, unless where he has rooted out the Roman-catholic religion,—viz., to prevent its clergy from communicating with the See of Rome, without its correspondence being transmitted through the hands of government. In a country now so hermetically closed to the rest of

Europe, such a proceeding would leave the Roman catholics wholly at the mercy of the persecution under which they are groaning. To this their clergy refused to conform, and Polish bishops have been imprisoned, and numbers of Romanist priests added on other pretexts to the victims of the United Greek church. Many hundreds of venerable men, for years beloved and respected in their parishes, are now with irons on their legs, half-shaven heads, and in coarse party-coloured garments, chained two and two, pursuing their weary journey to Siberia, which occupies two years, some every day expiring on the road, unmourned and unpitied. Not a few of these carry with them the germ of inevitable death, their frames being enfeebled, and their constitutions broken by having undergone the cruel sentence of the plitt.

The plitt is a sort of knout, and in experienced hands is no less formidable; and both are not, as it is vulgarly imagined, mere whips or scourges, but the most formidable instruments of torture and of execution ever devised. By the plitt, as well as by the knout, the executioner can at every stroke tear out from the muscles on each side of the spine, pieces of flesh the size of a walnut. With a fiend-like dexterity, the little horny tongue of boiled leather, which is fastened on a brass or iron ring at the extremity of the heavy thong, is just so much softened, by dipping it in milk, as to enable it, after bruising the flesh, to draw out the piece by the power of suction, as we see schoolboys, with a piece of wet leather and a string, lift up a brickbat. A very few more strokes of the plitt than are required from the heavier knout will suffice to inflict a mortal injury, or to take life on the spot.

A foreigner dwelling on a station through which the convicts are principally directed, assured the author that in a very short space of time he had recognised sixteen priests, but dared not address them; he had recognised them, notwithstanding their grisly beards, their convict dresses, and half-shaven crowns—some by the marks left by the tonsure, a small circular spot on the top of the head, shaven in commemoration of the crown of thorns of Christ, which is as distinctive of the Roman-catholic clergy as the moustachio of the soldier; others by the manner in which they sang the service of their church in Latin. How many had passed whose covered heads and silent voices afforded him no clue, he said it made his heart bleed to imagine.

The question between the Emperor Nicholas and the Latin clergy is still in abeyance. The energetic remonstrances of the pope produced more effect on the resolution of the emperor than was expected, and he at least found it necessary to answer them. There is something strange in the present century in the spectacle of a feeble old man whose temporal authority is only bolstered up by foreign bayonets, arresting even for a moment the upraised arm of absolute power in its insolent contempt of all, except its autocratic rights, or to find his attempt to call it to account, vouchsafed an answer; but even the obsolete authority of papacy regains something of its pristine vigour when its voice is raised against oppression, and that it can appeal to the common sympathies, not only of Christianity, but of humanity.

If we are to take, however, as measure of the extent of persecution, the aggregate of human misery

inflicted, then the recent persecution of the Jews even exceeds that of the United Greeks and Polish Roman-catholics. Let us imagine a whole population, surrounded for centuries by nations whose bitter enmity and prejudice has rendered it a matter of astonishment that it should still be in existence, and which nothing but the inherent vitality which has kept the people together since the destruction of Jerusalem—a vitality of which their Muscovite persecutors offer an almost parallel example—could have kept from annihilation. Not only the tyranny of the Russian administration directly weighed upon, but the oppression exercised over the Polish proprietors and population had, besides this, reacted on the despised Hebrews. The state of degradation, misery, and poverty, into which they had thus been sunk, may be conceived; and it was perhaps mainly the profits which their commercial aptitude, and their frontier situation allowed the more fortunate members of this community to make, together with that extensive charity towards each other which is such a redeeming trait in the Jewish character, that enabled this portion of the Hebrew people to drag on a miserable existence.

On the one side the local advantages of the country in which they had buried the bones of their forefathers for many centuries, and the pressure of their misery; on the other the enticing venality of the Russian employes, naturally induced them to devote their energies to the contraband trade—the only occupation by which the complicated oppression they suffered under would allow them to earn bread. At the same time in this they were not without numerous and successful competitors.

Instead of improving the organization of his custom-house, instead of giving proper salaries to its officers, by a fulminating edict, worthy of Nebuchadnezzar or the Pharaohs, the Emperor Nicholas remedies this small leakage in the revenues of the state, which may equal in amount the expenditure wasted on an imperial fête at Peterhoff, or a change in the uniform of one division of his guards. His ukase uproots the whole of this long-suffering population from the soil on which they had been so long settled, drives them for ever from their homes and their occupations, in all the severity of a bitter season—men, women, and children, by thousands upon thousands.

We have seen in some preceding chapters how the low rapacity of the Russian police grinds down and oppresses in St. Petersburg, under the very eyes of the emperor, a people whom he wishes to protect. Is it not easy to imagine what its conduct must be when far removed from his presence, and where he himself has given the signal for persecution? What remote chance do those stand who have accumulated a little property of rescuing from the hands of these persecutors the smallest wreck of it, and to whom are their poor to turn for countenance and assistance?

When thus stripped of everything of value, torn for ever from its home and country, the whole of this community is driven, like a herd of animals, into a distant and inhospitable government, before the whips and lances of their Cossac escort, exposed to all its brutality; for if the Cossac has many good points in his character, the habit of playing the gendarme all his life, in so many regions, has hardened him as much to the sufferings of his victims as a noble hound

to the pangs of the prey it is worrying; and if in his undefined though superstitious faith he has any religious prejudices, these are all against the children of Israel. He is not by any means certain that the Mahometan faith is not a good enough one in its way; but as regards the Jews, he commonly asks, in the words of the boy whom Coleridge admonished for striking a young Hebrew—"Why did he crucify our Christ?"

To the publication of this edict there is no fair parallel to be found in modern history, because those by which Isabella and Ferdinand expelled the Moors and Jews from Spain, and Louis XIV. his protestant subjects from France, in the first place left the option of conversion, and in the next appear to have been inspired by mistaken notions of national and legal interest; a great object was to be attained by a great injustice; whereas the emperor Nicholas has perpetrated a great injustice to obtain a little object.

It would appear that, unlike Napoleon, to whom it is the most palatable flattery to compare him, he has always entertained the illiberal prejudice of the Germans towards this people.* Not only had he long since added to the restraints which the laws of his predecessor imposed upon them, confining them to certain towns, but he had refused all composition for the military service of their proportion of recruits; they were sent, chained, to their destination, and invariably employed on the most disagreeable service.

In pursuance of this system, they were mostly

* The Jews are excluded from most of the governments of old Russia, and only allowed to reside in two or three cities of the empire. Every Jew must belong to some trade, or be treated as a vagabond—i. e., as a felon.

draughted into the navy, which is the recipient for all the refuse of the army—a strange way of improving its condition. Here again they were employed principally on board the steam boats and about the engines. One day the emperor came on board a steam-boat, in high good humour; conversing with the foreign inspector, he complimented him on the appearance of everything on board, and told him to report the most meritorious portion of the crew. They happened to be all Jews. The emperor's brow immediately became clouded. The inspector remarked, "I find them the best and most intelligent men I have on all the steam-boats." "What!" exclaimed the emperor, "do you mean to tell me that two Jews will do the work of one Russian?" "Of those I have here I find that one Jew is of more service than two Russians." The emperor turned short on his heel: the men did not receive the expected gratuity.

Although in spite of the law which banned their faith, Count Cancrin, the Imperial minister of finance, Stieglitz, the court banker, the Russian Rothschild, and the greatest capitalist in the emperor's dominions, and Jacobi, the cleverest of Russian savants and professors, were Jews, Nicholas seems never to have discarded his bitter prejudice against this people. His persecution of the united Greek and Roman Catholics was attempted to be concealed and veiled, because the sympathies it might excite in Hungary and Germany and in the Romanist world might prove some clog, at a future day, on the imperial policy; but with regard to the Hebrews there was no sympathy to fear; he therefore gave way to a movement of dislike and disgust, on the first opportunity which called for his

interference with them. One dash of his pen openly and boldly exiled a whole people, torn alike from all associations of the past, and launched upon a hopeless future. There was no sympathy to fear from any of the nations of Germany, because in every state of Germany, its empire, its kingdoms, and its principalities, this ill-fated race continues to endure a cruel and illiberal persecution of opinion.

The author is far from being an admirer of the character of the continental Hebrews. With many and brilliant exceptions, this people, like the middle and lower classes of Germans, and like the Muscovites, is no doubt in a great measure what its social condition during centuries has made it. It displays some traits of resemblance with the German—its servility, its interestedness, and utter want of adventurous spirit; and a considerable likeness to the Muscovite, in its fondness and aptitude for trade and barter,—all probably the result of circumstances. But these nations, uniting between them all the defects of the modern Israelites, ought surely to be the last to throw the stone at them.

It should be remembered, at least in Germany, what an immense proportion of all the real talent is Jewish, although the persecuted people, which, under its persecution, still furnishes it, constitutes so infinitesimal a proportion of the whole population. In a country in which they have hardly been allowed to accumulate wealth, how many greater names have not the Jews produced than immediately occur to the author's memory when he cites Jost, Mendelssohn, with his grandson the composer, Borne, Heine, the two Jacobis, Benderman the painter, Count Arnheim the minister, Professor Gans, Neander, Wehl, Benary,

and Meyerbeer. It should also be remembered, that in Germany the Jewish savants have not, like so many of their christian brethren, advocated the cause of patriotism and progress until they had rendered it worth the while of governments to give them paltry places, abandoning then for ever the party which looked forward to them as its light.

Let us now proceed to examine the Græco-Russian or, as it styles itself, the Oriental Catholic church, boasting the most numerous community but one in Europe. But we must in common justice, first disclaim for it any share in the fearful persecutions, both of Roman-catholics and Jews, which emanated solely from the imperial cabinet, not from the holy synod of the empire.

The national faith of Russia is well known to be that of the Greek church of the eastern empire. By the consent of the Greek patriarchs—too much occupied, after the fall of Constantinople, with their own safety to feel ambitious—it was allowed to detach itself in 1568, and left to its own government. At this time, the patriarch of Constantinople, having travelled for the purpose to Moscow, anointed its metropolitan Job, as the first Russian patriarch, giving him thus the supreme authority over all the faithful in the Muscovite Empire. The separation was thus peaceable and amicable, and it is only in a few forms and ceremonies but not in any of its dogmas, that the Russian church has since differed from the mother establishment. Few readers are not aware that the Greek church bears the closest resemblance to the Roman-catholic, both in its tenets and its rites; the differences which exist are indeed so insignificant, that the Greeks and Romans term each other recipro-

cally only schismatics, reserving the epithet of "heretics" to a more determined departure from the fold, such as that of all the sects which have sprung from the Reforms of Luther and of Calvin.

The fusion of these two churches into one, which many ineffectual efforts were made to effect, was a question often agitated in the middle ages, though probably never even contemplated with any sincerity by the Greeks, who, by vague promises of compromise and submission, merely sought to purchase western assistance against the Mahomedans, whose conquest finally swallowed up their empire.

It is a remarkable characteristic of the fanaticism of the human mind, that the more trifling the distinction of creed which arouses its hostility, the more bitter is the feeling excited: thus, the Roman-catholics and the sects of the reformed church have evinced a violence of reciprocal hatred, which neither has displayed so frequently against the Hebrew, the Moslem, or the Pagan; and thus, in proportion as the differences were small between the Greek and Catholic churches has been the inverse magnitude of their mutual hate.

We thus see the Greeks of Constantinople, at the last siege of the devoted city by Mahomet the Second, so shocked at the Latin sacrifice of the mass—not because they differed with the Romans on the doctrine of transubstantiation, but because the latter used unleavened instead of fermented bread—that, even in the extremity of their national agony, they rejected the proffered succour at the price of tolerating such an enormity, and were heard to declare that they would rather see the Moslem's turban than the Pope's tiara surmounting the church of St. Sophia.

The Greek church is said by theologians to differ in forty-one points from the Roman-catholic; but some of these distinctions are so subtle as to escape altogether the perception of an unsubtilizing inquirer. The most important are but trivial, with the exception of what relates to church discipline, and the independence of papal authority. It acknowledges, as the only rule of its faith, the Holy Scriptures and the authority of the seven first general councils; but the interpretation of the declarations of the one and the decisions of the other is only allowed to its patriarchs, which, in the Russian church, are represented by the "Holy Synod." It acknowledges the creeds of Nice and of St. Athanasius, and holds the doctrine of the Trinity, but differs from the Roman catholics in believing the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father alone, and not from the Father and the Son.

The Greek church denies the existence of purgatory, but, with singular-inconsistency, allows of prayers for the remission of the sins of the departed. It acknowledges, in common with the catholics, the conversion of the bread and wine at the communion-table, and in the sacrifices of the mass into the body and blood of Christ, but with the distinction of using the leavened instead of the unleavened bread.

It inculcates the veneration and invocation of the mother of the Redeemer, of the saints and martyrs, and a profound regard and respect for relics, to which it attributes a miraculous agency. It does not allow in its churches of the carved images of the holy Virgin, the saints, or martyrs; but recommends the use of painted representations, to assist devotion by such visible portraiture. In consequence, not only the

churches of the Russian faith are filled with images, on which the zeal of the faithful has lavished more wealth than the utmost piety of the Roman-catholic world on the shrines and figures of its own saints; but every one of its votaries considers it as a matter of obligation to have his own particular image, and to devote one to each apartment of a house.

Predestination is an important dogma of the Greek, and especially of the Græco-Russian church, with which it has become almost an article of faith. Like the Roman-catholic, it has seven sacraments, strikingly similar, even in their forms, excepting that of confirmation, which, under the name of chrism, the Greeks impose immediately after baptism.

The Greek church differs, also, in not only allowing, but enforcing, the marriage of its secular priests, who cannot take orders until married, and who, on the death of their wives, were formerly incapacitated from officiating further, although they have always been forbidden a second marriage, unless they choose to lay aside the ecclesiastic gown; for the Greeks, unlike the Roman catholics, do not hold that the priestly office invests the man with a permanently sacred character of which he can never subsequently divest himself, but assume that he may lay it aside with the hierarchical dignity which confers it.

Supererogation, dispensations, and indulgences, it disallows. Where no church has ever shewn less ambition—being rather apparently animated, as we have already observed, by the exclusiveness of feeling of Judaism than the proselytizing spirit of the church of Rome—it has shewn toleration, because indifferent to the conversion of those of other creeds; but has always

persecuted with cruelty those within the pale of its own fold who seem disposed to wander from the flock.

In common with the church of Rome, the evil of the wide departure from its tenets, in its usual practice, is in some measure compensated by the general spirit of them, which, laying less stress on faith than on good works, is likely to produce more practical morality than the too strict inculcation of the former, and to give rise, even in the breast of the bigot, to an active benevolence, which must qualify the austere fanaticism that would otherwise have nothing to redeem its uncharitable harshness. No church has ever been so little dogmatical as that of the Greeks and Russians; it neither pretends to infallibility, nor to determine the perdition of those souls which it believes to be wandering in error, as the church of Rome and the church of England, in their Athanasian creed, have done.

After the creation of a patriarchal see in Russia, the patriarchs, in a few years, acquired in Muscovy as much temporal authority as the popes in the middle ages exercised over the rest of Europe. They took the first seat after the tsar, who on certain occasions was forced to hold their stirrup; neither war nor peace could be undertaken without their blessing, and they had a power of life and death over all his subjects; even the united tsar and boyars were always obliged to yield to the patriarch and his clergy. One of the first steps of Peter the Great was to destroy this *imperium in imperio*, turning the vices and ignorance of the clergy against themselves. By means of firmness, cruelty, and ridicule, he succeeded in utterly subverting the hierarchical power; the faith itself

he left standing as a useful instrument, but wrenched its direction from the hands of the priests.

On the death of the Patriarch Adrian, in 1700, Peter utterly abolished the patriarchal office, and declared himself head of the church. He appointed an exarch, with very limited authority, immediately to preside over all spiritual affairs; but, twenty years after, he abolished the exarchy also, and instituted the "Holy Legislative Synod," which still continues to this day to govern them, under the immediate cognizance of the emperor, who, besides appointing the members of synod, chosen from the higher clergy, is always represented in this assembly by the ober-procurator, a layman, who can oppose all their resolutions till submitted to the decision of the emperor.

In the commencement of the reign of the reformer, Peter, one-half of the lands of the empire are said to have belonged to the clergy and the numerous convents and monasteries, and the contemporary writers give a most lamentable picture of their ignorance and corruption. "Few," says Jovet, "could even repeat the Ten Commandments, still less read." The monks, he tells us, were forced to lead so abstemious a life, within the walls of their monasteries, that whenever they came out of them they availed themselves of the opportunity with such right good will that they were obliged to be carried back to their holy walls. The nuns were as much dreaded by the foreign and Armenian merchants as the sirens and mermaids of the deep by the ancient Greek mariners; for by the lure of lucre, which proved a surer bait both to the youthful and the grey-bearded trader than their voice or their charms

could have been, they were accustomed to entice them to their convents under the pretext of purchasing their wares, and when there, to put them privately to death, and secure their merchandise. Strange orgies, and even fearful crimes, even at the present day, occasionally disgrace the walls of the Greek convents and monasteries, and in several instances transactions worthy of the dark ages have been dragged into the light, contrasting with the factitious and sickly civilization of the modern society without these cloisters.

Widely differing from the learned clergy of Rome, even the highest grades in the church were formerly plunged in almost equal darkness with their flocks. Their year commenced in the autumn, and, according to Voltaire, they gave as a reason for this, "that it was probable that God had created the world in the season in which all the fruits of the earth were in their full maturity," never imagining that their autumn might be the winter of some other clime. It cannot, after this, be wondered at, that when Peter changed it to the first of January, the common people should have admired the tsar who had been bold enough to change the course of the sun by ukase. On the introduction of tobacco, it was gravely disputed by subtle theologians whether its use were not sinful, and they condemned it on the text of the apostle, which says, "It is not that which goeth in which defileth, but that which cometh out of the mouth."

Notwithstanding the natural violence of his character, Peter was obliged to proceed with comparative caution in his reforms of this powerful body, and sometimes to conciliate it. He joined the clergy in their persecution of the "Raskolniki," sectarians, who

reprobated the use of images ; he condemned many of them to the flames, and drove them to revolt ; he punished blasphemy with exile to Siberia, and visited with the utmost severity the least dereliction of religious duty. But whenever he had, by some public act, belied the assertions of the clergy, who accused him of being the bitterest foe to religion, and endeavoured to prove him to be the Antichrist, he always followed it by some mortal blow at the clerical authority, until he had at last gathered it entirely into his own hand. But it was long after he had quelled the power of the Boyars that the priests still ventured to prophesy that Petersburg would be swallowed up by the waves, as well as all who had been guilty of the impiety of helping in its construction, and that they dared to shew a picture or a basso-relievo image of the Virgin, whose eyes shed tears over the devoted city,—Peter himself exposing the cheat to the populace, by shewing to them that it was effected by means of thickened oil. He took the opportunity of their executing, at the stake, for heresy, a young Russian, who had returned from his travels, to deprive them of the power of life and death, and he ordered that no man before the age of fifty should be allowed to take monastic vows.

The Russian church is now much as Peter left it after he had subdued it. In the higher orders of the clergy are now indeed to be found men of considerable erudition and learning, amongst whom we may cite the late metropolitan of Moscow. Its lower grades, still continue corrupt, ignorant, and debauched.

The Russian clergy are divided into three classes—

the archirès, the black clergy, and the white. The archirès are the superior authorities of the church, and comprise the metropolitans, the archbishops, and the bishops. The black clergy, or *tchornoi duhovenstvo*, is the monastic portion of it, from which the former must be chosen; it comprises the archimandrites, or abbots; the hegumins, abbots of the smaller houses of reclusion; the ieromonachs and ieradeacons, who perform divine service in the monasteries, and, lastly, the monks. Both the black clergy and those who have risen from it are obliged to lead austere and rigid lives; they are forbidden the use of animal food, and are not permitted to marry after they have entered this order. They are very wealthy, but wealth can have but few attractions for them, unless in the case of those who feel a satisfaction in the consciousness of the possession of gold, although they cannot apply it to any of those purposes which make it coveted by men; and on the whole, at the present day, those best acquainted with the subject laud both their learning and their piety. As much cannot be said for the secular priests, the *bialoe duhovenstvo*, or white clergy, who officiate in the cities and parishes, and appear the plebeians of this body. They are divided into protopopes, popes, deacons, sacristans, and readers, and are too often drunken, profligate, and grasping characters, extorting greedily every farthing they can from the superstition of their flock, and neglecting no means of working on it. It is common to see them intoxicated, and very uncommon to meet with one who has not got a pack of cards or two about him, which he produces directly they are in request. Nine-tenths of the remuneration attached to their office arises from

voluntary contributions, which they practise every method unscrupulous ingenuity can devise to wrest from the fears and hopes of their flock, who usually look upon the priest as the chosen of Heaven, in whom many things are allowable which would not be so in the layman; just as they see the man who wears the Imperial button pilfer and rob with impunity, whilst the retribution of the lash awaits the moujik who should venture on the same course. On the other hand, the duties which the Russian secular priest ought to perform are so arduous and exorbitant that the church ceremonial alone would fill up all his time, and leave him none to devote to study or to acts of charity.

The long monastic service of the church must be performed three times a day; he must attend to the administration of baptism, marriage, and the burial of the dead, with all the complication of their numerous and interminable ceremonies; he is enjoined to visit the sick, to comfort and instruct his flock, and he has, besides all this, to look to his own pecuniary interests—the only part of all this catalogue which he never neglects, unless when other duties happen to go hand-in-hand with it.

The clergy of all denominations is generally recruited from the families of the clergy, but amongst the white clergy the church may be considered as an hereditary occupation, and has always been so. Previously to the reign of Peter, their profession was too valuable not to make it tacitly an affair of caste; but when his severity, and the reforms he introduced, rendered it as unenviable as before it had been coveted, and when he ordered that none should be ordained who had not received a proper education for the min-

istry, in schools established for that purpose, he soon found that so few candidates for the surplice presented themselves to undergo the preparatory course of instruction, that the church was in danger of being, at a future date, without any clergy to administer its rites and promulgate its doctrines.

To remedy this evil, he made a law, that the sons of priests should be allowed to follow no occupation but that of their father, and this law had remained unrepealed until within the last few years. Hence many thousands have been driven to enter the priestly order, not from choice, but from necessity, and long habit seems to have framed, in this respect, a law as seldom departed from as the ukase of Peter, whilst it remained yet unrepealed. On the death of the wives of the secular clergy, they are allowed to enter the monastic order, a privilege of which they seldom avail themselves, though it opens the way to the highest dignities of the church, which, however, can only be attained at the sacrifice of all their jovial and dissipated habits, and by a course of abstinence and study. The number of monasteries and convents in the whole empire is said not to exceed 500 at the present time.

The whole clerical population, including its highest and most humble ranks, amounts to somewhere about 500,000 individuals; they all enjoy in common the privilege of complete exemption from all civil taxation, and cannot be subjected to corporal punishment, even for capital crimes. Promotion amongst the black clergy, to the rank of bishop, depends entirely on the pleasure of the emperor. When a vacancy takes place in a diocese it is customary for the "synod" to select

two or three candidates from the body of archimandrites or abbots, one of whom his majesty appoints to the vacant bishopric. The autocrat, however, has the power, and sometimes exercises it, of paying no regard whatever to the choice of the holy legislative synod.

The empire was a few years ago divided into thirty-six eparchies, or bishoprics, (since increased by seven or eight,) none of which are in any way subordinate to each other, and these are administered by archbishops of different rank—metropolitans, archbishops, or bishops—but whose title is in nowise attached to the diocese, but as personal as the orders and crosses which the emperor confers on them, and in which they may be seen officiating. These eparchies contain nearly twenty-eight thousand cathedrals and churches; but their number has not increased proportionately with the population, for we find that a hundred and fifty years ago, the city of Moscow alone contained twelve hundred churches.

These buildings are usually large, built either of wood or brick, in the form of a square, a quadrangle, but especially in the figure of a cross. There is a peculiar and picturesque aspect about their semi-Asiatic architecture, and the well-known enormous mosque-like domes, either blazing in one sheet of gilding or silver leaf, or painted green or blue and studded with gold and silver stars. Besides the larger, there are generally four smaller domes, which are apt to assume too much of a pepper-castor appearance. The belfry is commonly separate from the church; it often rises in a column-like steeple, from the midst of the churchyard which surrounds the house of wor-

ship. The Russian foible for enormous bells, we have long since read of in every elementary book of geography.

The interior of the churches is more striking than imposing. Decked out with a pompous magnificence, which renders it gaudy and glittering, the Russian clergy have not had the art of investing it with that character of solemnity and grandeur which, in the Roman-catholic cathedrals, involuntarily fills the breast of the beholder with awe and veneration. In the true spirit of a barbaric people, they have sought in a mass of paint and gilding, in rich stuffs, and in a display of gold, silver, and jewellery, to produce the effect which the intellectual Italians sought in the ideal conceptions of architecture, of sculpture, and of painting, embellishing indeed at times with too much finery, but never depending on the mere gorgeousness of decoration.

The church is divided into three parts. The inner and most holy division, contains the altar, on which is raised a massive cross of gold or silver, and on it a richly bound copy of the Scriptures is placed, clasped with bands of silver or gold, often richly set with precious stones. The second division, intended to contain the congregation, is the nave of the church; it is separated from the altar part by the *Ikonostas*, a kind of screen, on which are pictures of our Saviour, of the Virgin, of the apostles and saints, and containing in the middle what are called the royal doors, which are shut or opened to admit the view of the congregation into the sanctuary, at different phases of the service. These pictures, always wretched daubs, shew very often only the face, hands,

and feet of the holy personages they are intended to represent, all the body and garments being formed by one raised and embossed sheet of gold or silver, and often studded with precious stones of incalculable value, the pious offerings of the faithful during many ages.

In the country of the Cossacs, who, differing from the Muscovite in character, in feeling, and in temper, have perhaps principally been bound to him by the link of religious sympathy, before these images are suspended the fruits of their plunder in France, Italy, and Germany, gathered in their predatory excursions, as they hovered like a cloud round the Russian armies; and in the pettiest village church, the richest offerings are sometimes collected together. Before this screen, divided from the congregation by a rail, sit the choir of singers and the readers.

The third division of the church is the *Trapexa*, the porch of the temple, which is only filled with worshippers when the nave affords no further room. The service, which, from its extreme length, is evidently of monastic origin, consists, besides the sacrifice of the mass, in the chaunt and recitation of psalms and hymns, which, for the sake of brevity, are now much more read than sung, and when read are hurried through with such rapidity as to be utterly unintelligible. When sung, however, nothing can be more imposing than these passages of the Greek ritual, a fine bass voice being made an indispensable qualification in all those whose duties will lead them to officiate in the churches; and the study of music being assiduously attended to, the richness and the sweet solemnity of this unmixed vocal music, far surpasses

even the finest effects of the mingled song and organ tones which sweep through the gothic aisles of the cathedrals of the Latin church. We must add to this the appearance of the clergy of the Greek church, decidedly the most imposing of any clergy in the world, especially that of the very portion whose conduct and morals are so little in consonance with their venerable exterior. Taken all in all, they are the finest class of men in the empire ; a fact for which one can only account by the supposition that as only those who have good voices are selected for this office, power of the voice is a general indication of organic vigour. They allow their hair and beard to grow to their natural length, without interfering in any way with the luxuriance of nature. Their locks flow back upon their shoulders, as long as the dishevelled hair of women, and their beards descend upon their chests, and have an indescribable effect in qualifying the ignoble expression of the meanest countenance, and in rendering a noble countenance majestic.

These priests are the only class or people who glory in all their hairy ornaments. The Moslem lets grow his beard, but shaves his head ; the moujik lets grow his beard, but cuts short his hair on the line of the lower extremity of the ear ; and in civilized Europe we leave very little either of hair or beard. There is only the Greek priest who scrupulously preserves them both intact, and, when nature has favoured him in other respects, presents to our view the beau ideal of a patriarch of scriptural times.

It is difficult to be convinced, without seeing the Russian clergy, that man loses as much of the dignity of his aspect by the scissors and the razor, as the

horse of his beauty when shorn of his tail and mane; nor is it easy to repress the suspicion that the universal custom which pervades the human race in this respect, and which leads them, according as they wear the hat or the turban, to make war on the inferior or superior crop which should adorn their heads or chins, has been the original suggestion of some tail-less foxes, who, unlike those of *Æsop's* fable, were never requested to turn round by the multitude.

But if this custom has been absurd in the young, it is especially so in the old; for when age thins the locks and bares the skull, it strengthens the beard and renders it more venerable, as it mixes its dark tints with silver; and the bald old man who, having refused the compensation which nature offers, resorts to a wig to render his physiognomy grotesque, would have inspired awe as a Russian pope, which even decrepitude would not have diminished.

Of late years the custom of preaching has been introduced into the Russian church, but so recently, that excepting in Petersburg and Moscow, even pulpits are yet unknown. Formerly, no attempt was made to explain the Scriptures, or to comment on them, beyond reading occasionally some of the homilies of St. Chrysostom. One of the last patriarchs even banished to Siberia the protopope of Morum and other priests who had ventured to preach, asserting "that the Lord had always operated through his mere word, and had thus founded his church, without further explaining it—that therefore it was not needful for his clergy to do so."

The Russians make no use of a complete copy of the Bible in their churches, retrenching certain books

which they consider too immodest to be brought into a house of worship. Even their clergy very seldom possess an entire copy of the Scriptures. Their church books are all written in the old Sclavonic, in which language the service is also performed, and which resembles the modern Russ about as nearly as the English tongue of the reign of King Henry the First assimilates to the English of the present day. They consist principally of twenty ponderous tomes, containing the service of the church, of the writings and commentaries of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, or *Quirilla Jerusalinski*, as they call him, who, together with St. Chrysostom and St. Basilus, seem to be their principal authorities on the interpretation of the sacred writings and the rules of their monastic orders; of the writings of St. Chrysostom, of St. John Damascenus, of St. Gregory Nazarene, and *Ephrin Syria*, or Ephraim, Deacon of Edessa in Syria, and five volumes of the lives of the saints, from which passages are read in the matines of monasteries. The twenty volumes containing the church service consist of twelve *minocon*, or one for every month of the year, containing the services and hymns for the festivals of saints.

The *Octoechos* compose two volumes, which are divided into eight tones or voices, each of which contain hymns for the days of one week, which are mixed in the service according to the subjects to which the days of the week are appropriated. Thus—Sunday, to the resurrection; Monday, to the angels; Tuesday, to John the Baptist; Wednesday, to the Virgin Mary; Thursday, to the apostles; Friday, to the passion of Christ; and Saturday, to the Saints and Martyrs. To these there is a supplementary volume

to supply the deficiency in the *minocon*. The psalter and the hours take up another volume. The Book of Psalms is divided into one-and-twenty parts, one of which is recited at every service, so that the whole is gone through every week. The Book of Prayers contains the prayers for vespers, matines, and communion service for the use of the priests and deacons. The fast *Triods* fill two volumes, and relate to the service during the great fasts. The four gospels, a portion of which is read every day, compose another volume. The book of Offices contains the rites and ceremonies of burials, baptisms, christenings, and all the sacraments, and the twentieth tome, called the book of regulations, contains directions for the proper use of the nineteen preceding volumes.

The fasts of the Russian church are long and severe, and occupy on the whole more than half the year. The single fast of Easter lasts for seven consecutive weeks. It begins by what is called the "*butter week*," during which, a mere abstinence of flesh is enjoined; but the week ensuing the carnival, which intervenes with its boisterous dissipation, they abstain for forty hours even from butter-milk and eggs, and the more devout only indulge in salt fish on the Sundays. The second fast begins after Pentecost;—the third great fast begins in August, and lasts fifteen days; and the fourth, from the 12th of November till Christmas. All through the year they either abstain from meat or all fat substances on the Wednesday and the Friday.

All the peasantry and lower order of the Russians are profoundly devout, and blindly superstitious; they never pass a church, or hear the clock strike, without

crossing themselves; they all carefully trim and replenish the lamp in which they burn the fine oil of the olive or wax tapers before the image of their tutelar saint; they assist at the service, of which they cannot comprehend a word, in the most humble and attentive manner; and they never refuse a piece of bread to the beggar who asks for it in the name of God. They have the rite of confession in the Russian, as well as in the Romish church, with this difference, which neutralizes all the practical excellence of the institution—repentance alone suffices to obtain forgiveness of the sins committed—but neither restitution nor atonement are insisted on, when another party has sustained loss or injury by the sin confessed.

On receiving the sacrament, which, as well as the Roman-catholics and Lutherans, they hold to be the real body and blood of Christ, they consider that any sin committed on that day is peculiarly heinous, and to avoid all temptation thereunto, they often resort to the singular expedient of going to bed and sleeping the time away. With many of the mercantile classes, with most of the employés, and with the greater part of the landed aristocracy, all faith and confidence in their creed has long departed, but more or less its superstitions remain, like the dross that adheres to the vessel when the valuable metal which it disfigured and tarnished has been molten and poured away. This melancholy tendency of the human mind, still to cherish the superstition, where it has rooted out devotion and belief, is too often seen in Russia—a tendency which Molière has admirably depicted in his *Don Juan*, where he makes his servitor, who thinks lightly

of his master's Atheism, exceedingly shocked that he should doubt the story of the Wandering Jew.

The veneration of the Russians for images is excessive—that is to say, for ornamented pictures of the virgin and the saints—for a sculptured figure, or one in alto-relief, they would consider it idolatrous to prostrate themselves before, as they prostrate themselves to the pictures encased in rich frames, and in which the halo round the head and the figure and garments are, with the poorer classes, of gilt or silvered copper, set often with stones of coloured glass, to imitate the gold and silver and jewellery so profusely lavished by their wealthier brethren, and in their churches, on similar objects. In every shop, in every house, in every room, one of these pictures hangs in the corner, with a little lamp suspended to it by a chain, in which, on Sundays and holidays, a light is always burning. To this the merchant turns, and crosses himself, as he swears by it that he is losing money by the sale of merchandise on which he is really gaining a hundred per cent., mentally promising the saint to spend a portion of his gain in tapers and in oil devoted to his honour, and thus cunningly imagining that he has made his patron in some degree an accomplice of his cheat. To this image, on entering a room, he immediately turns; he addresses no one, speaks to no one, till he finds it, and has made the cross before it. Even under the piazzas of the market-place, these pictures, richly chased in silver, and illumined by lights and lamps, gratify the piety of buyers and sellers, and draw from the passer by the sign of the cross and a five-kopec piece.

As much, and more, than the household gods were

to the Romans, has always been his image to the Russian. When, in 1610, I. a Gardie occupied Novgorod with his army, and the Swedish soldiers found that the inhabitants had concealed everything valuable, they bethought themselves, at last, of carrying away the images from the houses in which they were quartered—a scheme which fully answered their expectations, as the inhabitants pursued them with lamentations when they marched away, and paid the most exorbitant sums to ransom their penates from captivity.

It is also related, that in 1643, the tsar was thrown, as well as his whole court, into great consternation, by the fact of his image becoming alarmingly red in the face—a circumstance which puzzled even the patriarch, until the painter being appealed to, declared that the last covering of paint having gradually been kissed away, was beginning to shew through it the original coat of red over which it had been laid.

There are both stationary and itinerant dealers in these pictures, who do not sell them, as it is acknowledged to be impious to traffic in such articles, but who exchange new ones for old—like the magician with his lamps, in the story of Aladdin—only that they expect to receive as the difference what is understood to be the full value of the thing exchanged. When an image is very old, and in a very disgraceful state, as the Russian dares not burn it or destroy it, he treats it as the mother of Moses did the future prophet—he places it on a board, and sends it floating down a river, where it is expected that it will take care of itself.

There exist in Russia many dissentient sects, known

under the general name of Raskolniki, or schismatics, an appellation derived from the word *roskol*, to divide. One of the most remarkable of these assumes to be of the original church ; its members call themselves of the *staré ver*—or of the “ old faith ”—and remind one, by the gloomy austerity of their manners, and the simplicity of their lives, of the old Scotch covenanters. They have outlived many persecutions ; the Emperor Alexander gave them a long breathing time, but Nicholas treats them with harshness and severity. Four years since, one of these enthusiasts, excited by the persecution directed against his fellow sectarians, sought out the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, and calling him the antichrist, spat in his face, and struck him on the cheek. He was condemned to Siberia and the knout, and the Metropolitan, much to his credit as a Christian prelate, interceded warmly for him, but the emperor was inexorable. . He was knouted, and is said to have expired before he reached the prison after the execution. In addition to these old schismatics from the Greek church, of late years, sects whose opinions and practice are destructive of the whole social edifice, spring up with such alarming rapidity as to menace more nearly than any other causes, in the minds of well-informed Russians, the existence of the empire ; but this is a subject that will be treated more fully in a future chapter, in which some account of these sects will be given.

If we look to the history of the Russian church, we find it disgraced by many cruel examples of persecution towards the schismatics of its own creed ; hundreds of the sect whose principal distinction was, that they signed the cross with three fingers instead of

with two, and who were termed *Vosko-Jesuits*, were burned alive by the last patriarch and by Peter the Great. Towards those who professed a faith entirely distinct from their own, they have always evinced comparative mildness, and have never gone beyond the gentle means of persuasion to gain over to their fold even the vanquished, on whom they might have imposed their law; reminding us of those animals who have no animosity or gall but against those of their own species.

It has been already observed that the recent persecution of the united Greeks and of the Polish Roman Catholics, cannot be laid to the charge of the Russian church, being, as it is, the act of an autocratic individual, with which it has only feebly co-operated.

END OF VOL. I.

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